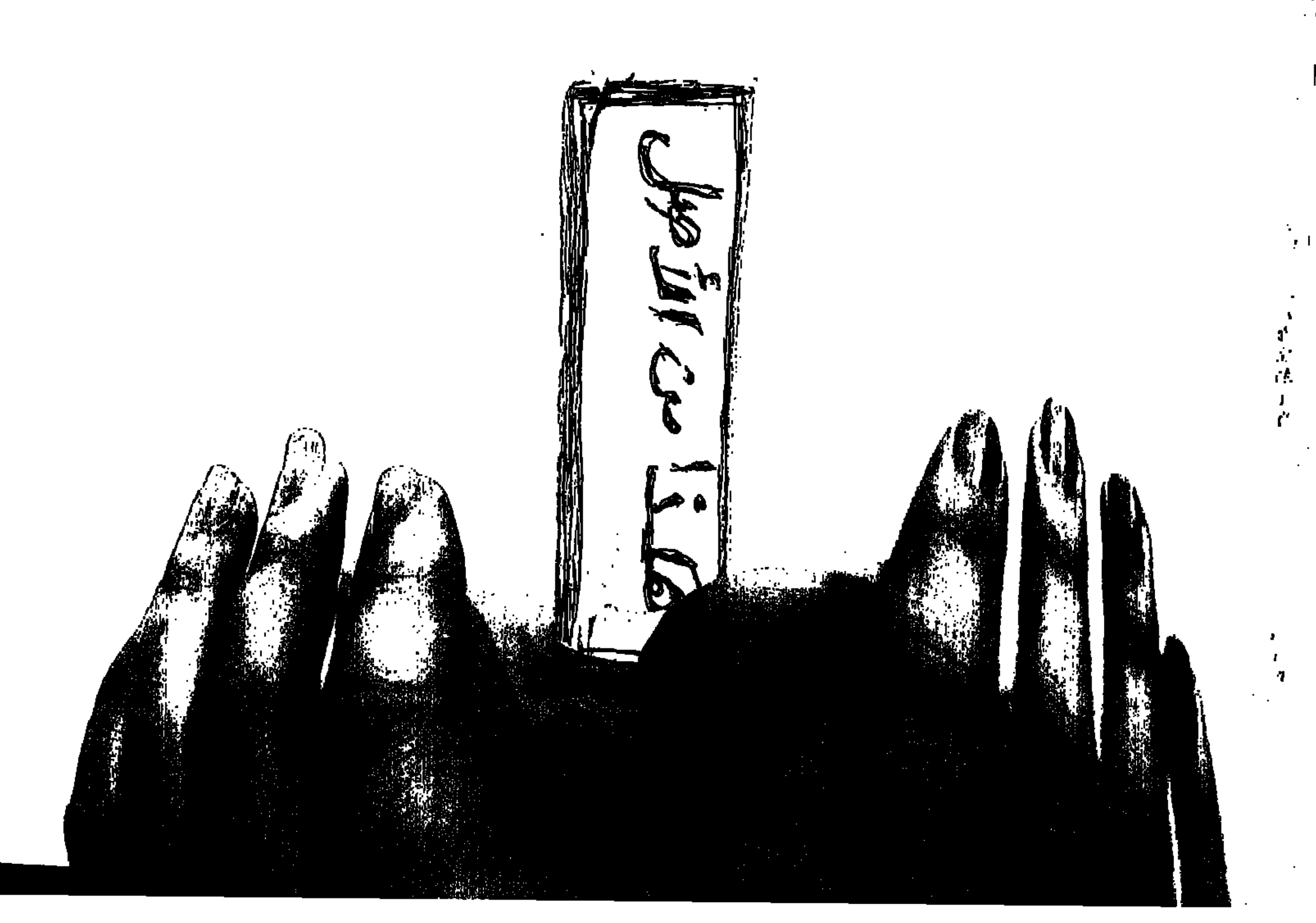


The Guardian Weekly

Vol 155, No 1
Week ending July 7, 1996

The Washington Post · Le Monde

David Hearst in Moscow warns Boris Yeltsin to watch his back after the election

Beware the might of the General

BORIS YELTSIN in all probability will be declared the winner of the second round of presidential elections this week. The number of eligible voters in Russia is growing, a strange phenomenon in a country where the mortality exceeds the birth rate. The latest estimate by an officially sponsored poll was 108 million voters, 4 million more than in December. Yeltsin will muster the right amount of votes, even if it is from dead souls.

But there are some long faces in the Kremlin. Having thrown everything into his campaign — the fear of the Gulag, pop groups, untold billions of roubles, and campaign visits the length and breadth of the continent — the birthday boy himself went missing, three days before the big event.

Yeltsin disappeared from public sight, cancelling his second official engagement in as many days, claiming to be recovering from a sore throat. Even a television appearance on Monday failed to stem rumours about his health. Meanwhile his two main opponents, Gennady Zyuganov, the communist leader, and Grigori Yavlinsky, leader of the liberal block Yabloko, are also low-key in their pronouncements. They too have remained in Moscow.

The only person who is in full voice is General Alexander Lebed. Lebed has been very active since he was turned by 11 million votes from being a humble two-star reserve general into a presidential security adviser. On his first day at work, he got rid of defence minister, General Pavel Grachev, on the third day, Yeltsin's trusted bodyguard General Alexander Korzhakov, his security chief General Mikhail Barsukov and the deputy prime minister Oleg Soskovyets, and, on the eighth day, another seven generals.



'Together we'll win' . . . Muscovites pass a Yeltsin billboard urging them to vote for him PHOTOGRAPH: BORIS YURCHENKO

On his 12th day, Lebed suggested Russia needed to restore the post of vice-president, which should go to someone with "strong, authoritatively allocated constitutional powers". No prizes for guessing who this should be.

Yeltsin has two problems. The first is how to emerge from this election with a mandate clear enough to be able to crush the communist opposition, or at least help it to rattle itself to bits. Zyuganov's strongest argument for a coalition government after an election which he loses is that no president can rule a Russia which has been so clearly and geographically polarised by the vote, and by economic reforms.

The free market has arrived, but in patches. Around Moscow where construction is booming, the streets are lit up once again by the coloured signs of new shops; there are small towns and villages where little has changed. Foreign investment in Russia is $2.8 billion — half that of Hungary, and a 12th of that in China. The state debt on unpaid wages and salaries has this year grown from 18 to 23 trillion roubles, and the budget deficit is 9.6 per cent of GNP.

Few are paying their taxes. As the economics minister Yevgeny Yasin, said ruefully: "We would have just about squeezed through this year, if it had not been for the elections." Russia's factories desperately need to start working again, but the state is virtually bankrupt.

The first round of the vote showed this polarisation graphically. There were 25 regions where Yeltsin got more votes than the

continued on page 3

Karadzic thumbs his nose at West

Julian Borger in Pale

THE SERB Democratic Party (SDS), which controls the Serb-held half of Bosnia, was huddled behind closed doors on Monday picking candidates for September's elections. The head of the selection committee — appointed unanimously last week — was Radovan Karadzic.

There could be no clearer demonstration of how the international community's failure to lever the Bosnian Serb leader out of power is casting a shadow over the prospects for long-term peace in the Balkans.

A source in the Serb stronghold of Pale said Mr Karadzic would use the vetting procedure to filter out moderates, concentrated in the western city of Banja Luka.

"Up to now, you've been hearing different things from Pale and Banja Luka — the new party lists will bring things more into line," the source said on condition of anonymity, which is the only way Bosnian Serb dissidents talk these days.

A brief flowering of independent thinking in Banja Luka in May has since been stifled; now only hard-line separatists are likely to find a place on the party lists. And given the SDS dominance of Bosnian Serb politics, elections are increasingly likely to deepen Bosnia's partition.

Claims over the weekend by the international community's representative, Carl Bildt, that Mr Karadzic had stepped down were exposed as nonsense by the Serb separatist's open display of power. Mr Karadzic's deputy, Biljana Plavsic, said he had only delegated his functions to her temporarily to concentrate on the elections.

Mr Karadzic offered further embarrassment to Mr Bildt on Monday by appearing on television to castigate his enemies. "The international community is pressuring me not only to resign but not to engage in party business," Mr Karadzic said in a taped broadcast of remarks he made to the SDS executive committee. "Their opponent therefore is not Radovan Karadzic, their opponent is the Serb Democratic Party. Their opponent is the Serb people."

Mr Karadzic's flexing of political muscle has also exposed Nato's limitations. The Nato-led peacekeeping force, I-For, said last month it had increased its patrols in Pale to cramp Mr Karadzic's style.

In theory, I-For troops have the authority to arrest war criminals such as Mr Karadzic if they meet them in the normal course of their duties. But there was little sign of I-For in the village on Monday, and recent press surveys have found that few of the 60,000-strong force would recognise the Serb leader if he shook them by the hand.

Officials in Mr Bildt's office maintained that his diplomacy had sown confusion in Bosnian Serb ranks, but on Monday it was the various organs of the international community that looked in disarray.

Mr Bildt's deputy, Michael Steiner, issued a challenge to his own putative employers, the major powers, to make good a threat of sanctions made at the G7 summit last week.

He conceded that Mr Bildt had the power to trigger sanctions on his own — and that he was due to consider his next move on returning to Sarajevo from Stockholm this week — but insisted that "whatever is done has the full support of the international community".

His remarks recalled the days of the United Nations' mission in Bosnia (Unprofor) from 1992-95, which was reduced by timidity and lack of international consensus to near-paralysis in its dealings with the Serbs. "There is a danger of going through 'Unprofor-isation' again," said a veteran UN aid official. "After all, it's more or less the same governments involved."

Mostar election, page 3
Comment, page 12

Austria	AS30	Malta	45c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 400	Sweden	SK 16
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Arizona militia group arrested in 'bomb plot'

TWELVE members of an anti-government group that called itself the "Viper Militia" were arrested this week and charged with plotting for more than two years to blow up government buildings, *Luna Shyrn reports from Phoenix.*

Members of the Arizona group held training exercises in the desert in which they made and detonated ammonium nitrate bombs and rockets, according to the indictment in Phoenix.

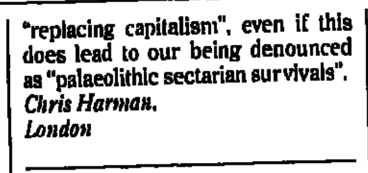
At a news conference in Washington, the US attorney general, Janet Reno, said the men plotted to use explosives to destroy buildings housing the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the FBI, the Internal Revenue Service, the Immigration and Naturalisation Service, the Secret Service, the Phoenix Police Department and the Arizona National Guard.

Anti-government paramilitary groups gained widespread attention in the United States following the deadly bombing of a federal office building in Oklahoma City last year. The defendants in that bombing are former Army colleagues who have been linked to militia groups.

Ammonium nitrate was used in the Oklahoma bomb, but there was no indication of any connection between that bombing and the Arizona case.

Authorities made the arrests on Monday, cordoning off a half-block area in the working-class suburb of Peoria where two men charged in the indictment, Randy Lynne Nelson and Dean Carl Pleasant, shared a house.

A next-door neighbor, Dennis Dennison, said the two had expressed anger at the government's handling of the standoffs near Waco, Texas, and at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, but said he wouldn't describe them as anti-government. "I think they're like the rest of us, they get frustrated about legislation that restricts gun use," he said. — *AP*



Labour brains need to show their brawn

ERIC HOBSBAWM is right to urge intellectuals to take part in the development of principles and policies for a future Labour government (If the truth be told, June 30). He is mistaken, however, in suggesting that there is "a wide gap" separating the Labour party from "intellectuals of the left". The overwhelming response to the setting up of Nexus, a network of intellectuals of the centre-left, has demonstrated how keen many academics and policy experts are to contribute to the emerging agenda of New Labour.

Hobsbawm reprimands the Labour party for being concerned more about its electoral chances than its intellectual foundations. But the intellectual moorings of the centre-left are themselves in need of clarification and defence. It is unacceptable for intellectuals to sit back and wait for the party to stumble upon policies that they may or may not endorse. Rather, we must try to emulate the alliance between intellectuals and policy-makers that proved so successful for the New Right from the mid-1970s onwards. Whether or not a Labour government succeeds largely depends upon the extent to which intellectuals participate in shaping the values and policies that define it.
Stewart Wood,
St John's College, Oxford

I AGREE with Eric Hobsbawm that "there is a role for non-elected and disavowable, if troublesome, Labour intellectuals". The problem is that in New Labour these intellectuals find themselves deprived of a suitable forum on which to wage their debate.

Time was when Labour had its house organ which kept members up to date and gave them a forum on which to debate issues (Labour Weekly); a magazine aimed at in-depth analysis and debate (New Socialist) and an organ enabling the younger members to exchange news and views (Labour Youth). All three have been closed down by the party bureaucracy to be replaced by the bland leadership fanzine called Labour Party News. This has had a devastating effect on the intellectual quality of debate within the party.

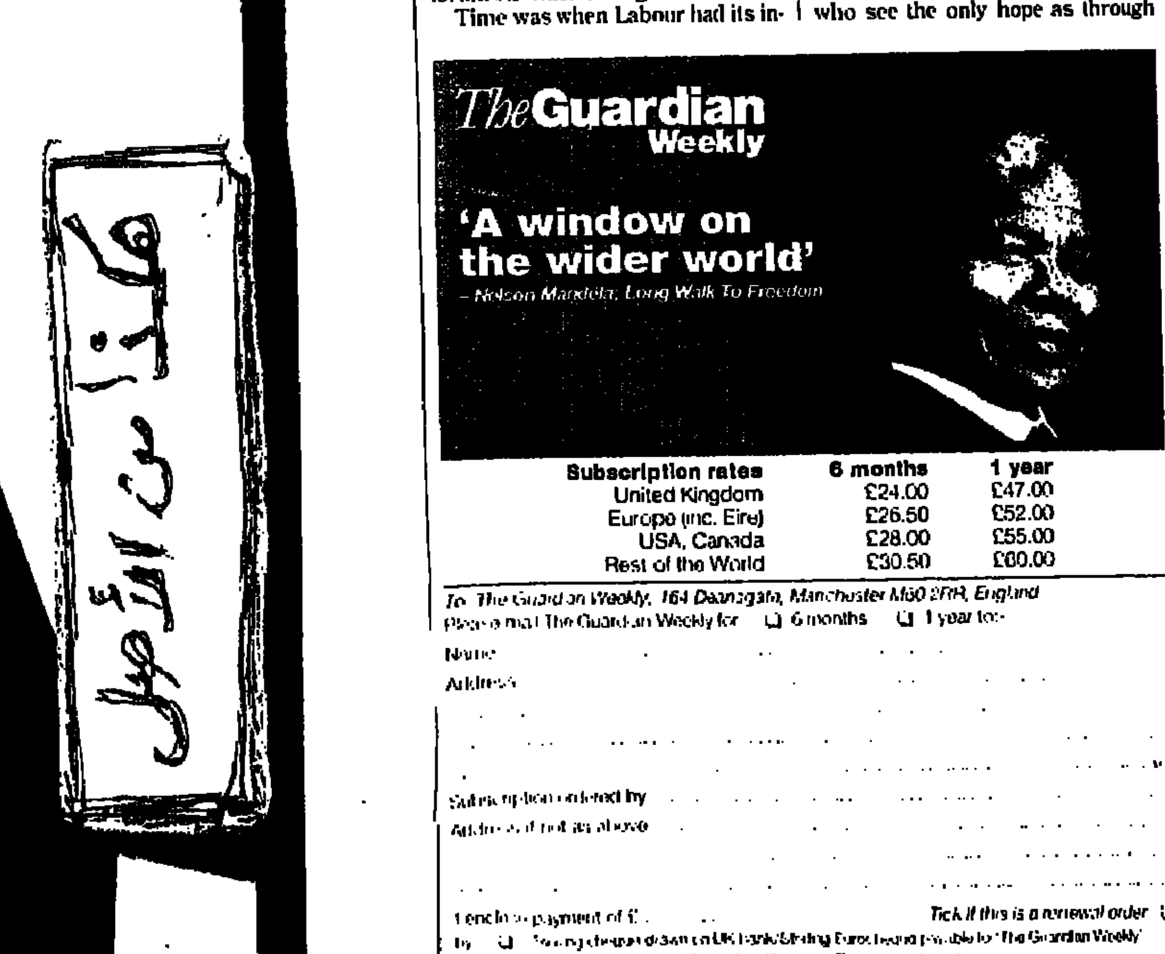
The party leadership must realise that informed political debate is neither an optional extra nor the harbinger of disunity. It has everything to gain from enabling such a debate, and providing the means of communication which will enable it to reach the widest possible audience.
Walter Cairns,
Manchester

ARE there two Eric Hobsbawms? One argues in your pages that "left intellectuals" who do not want to be "palaeolithic sectarian survivals" must accept the basic contours of the "neo-revisionist" policies pursued by Tony Blair, aiming "to regulate and socialise the wealth-creating . . . dynamism of capitalism, not replace it".

The other published The Age Of Extremes just two years ago, which ended by highlighting how old attempts to regulate the system did not work any more and insisting that we face an ever more chaotic and violent world in which liberal democratic nostrums are likely to prove futile.

It is a conclusion that gets the wholehearted support of those of us who see the only hope as through "replacing capitalism", even if this does lead to our being denounced as "palaeolithic sectarian survivals".
Chris Harman,
London

THANKS to Eric Hobsbawm for such a cogent article on the dilemma that so many of us on the left face in responding to the grinding inevitability of New Labour. It helps to restore a sense of purpose and self-esteem.
Paul Roberts,
Newcastle-upon-Tyne



UN's man of the moment

AN INTRIGUING connection can be made between the recent news reports concerning the United Nations standoff involving its weapons inspectors in Iraq and the debate over selecting the next UN secretary-general.

While Boutros-Ghali has been one of the UN's most articulate spokespersons over its 50-year history, the current secretary-general will be remembered as one of its least effective and most magnified leaders. As a result of this perception, the world community's appraisal of his efforts to address the UN's various crises is by and large negative.

None the less, the UN has not been without its successes. The reports from Baghdad highlight one person chiefly responsible for a recent triumph of UN diplomacy: the chairman of the UN Special Commission for Iraq, Sweden's Rolf Ekeus.

Given the acrimonious debate over the re-appointment of Boutros-Ghali — as well as the handful of proposed successors whose support seems based on narrowly defined geographic and gender-based considerations — perhaps it is time the UN membership considers a person uniquely qualified to address the organisation's crises. Many share the view that reforming the UN will not be accomplished without the leadership of a reform-minded insider. Certainly the UN's fiscal crisis will not be resolved without a secretary-general largely supported by the US delegation. But ultimately the UN needs a tough-minded diplomat unafraid to face down the organisation's problems and critics. The world community deserves a strong leader at the UN.

The courage Ekeus displays as he stands "toe to toe" with the Iraqi regime strikes the right chord as we debate the future of the UN's leadership.
Rex P Stoner,
Amman, Jordan

Casualties in the football wars

AS A British citizen resident in Germany for five years, and quite used to German incomprehension as to British concerns on the future of the European Union, it is increasingly clear to me that German opinion links the mindless stupidity of the British tabloids, or football hooligans, and British opposition to European federalism in one package (Mirror back on warpath, June 30). Similarly, English people tend to equate Scottish demands for greater independence with Scots euphoria when England lose a football match. It is a pity when sensible discussion is made impossible by tabloid dementia.
Robert Chambers,
Frankfurt, Germany

THIS distasteful xenophobia is not confined to reporting of football. There is no pretence of balance in much of what is written on matters of national importance concerning the EU on financial, political or policy matters. It runs counter to the national interest, having implications for law and order, international business, and the standing of this nation's institutions in the eyes of the international community.

Ask any anglophile what he/she admires about the British: love of fair play, honesty, tolerance, love of learning. How hollow this will seem to any foreigner reading our tabloid press.
Alan M Smith,
Stockport

THE Football Supporters' Association, formed in 1985 after the events of Heysel, has worked tirelessly towards the aim of friendship through football, and in the fight against racism and hooliganism in the game. We have successfully run "football embassies" in each of the host cities of Euro 96. The type of reporting seen recently could, in one headline, destroy the work of 11 years, were it not for the fact that the majority of football supporters deplore mindless sensationalism.
Barbara A Biggs,
Football Supporters' Association,
Wrexham, Wales

DO THE tabloids not realise that attacks such as that in the Daily Mirror are more likely to unite the German players than demoralise them? Witness the England performances following the barracking the team received from certain quarters of the British media.
Gary Rudland,
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Concern about tourism

CATHERINE BENNETT was so incensed when she wrote about tourism (Why the right people choose to stay at home, June 23) that she forgot to state plainly the three beliefs implicit in her piece:

1) Tourists must shun countries that breach accepted norms of democracy, human rights and civilised labour practice. 2) Travel agents, and guidebook and radio producers, who suggest otherwise are opinionated and low. 3) Intrepid middle-class tourists are boastful and callous.

Perhaps Ms Bennett has cogent arguments to back these beliefs. But I wonder whatever they could be. One trouble with 1) is that it rules out so much of the world. Another is that it will exert no economic effect and apply no political pressure, unless it is widely obeyed. This is unlikely, especially with scores of potential countries to boycott. While one group of stay-at-homes rallies opposition to forced labour in Burma, another will prefer to concentrate on genital mutilation in Togo, or child abuse in Wales.

As for 2) and 3), I expect those concerned will be open and high-minded, modest, and kind enough to ignore a few hasty words.
Brian McLean,
Budapest, Hungary

Briefly

ALEX BRUMMER writes (There is life after downsizing, June 2) that the experience of the 1990s suggests that economies such as Britain and the US, where companies have ruthlessly pursued downsizing, have increased their competitiveness. On another page of the same issue is a report that the UK was in 11th place in the global competitiveness league seven years ago, 15th last year and 19th this year. Putting the economy, in this way, in the same bracket as that of the US, is something one could expect from those in the UK who live in a distorting nostalgia for long-gone imperial greatness. And there seem to be plenty of them.
Hayden Roberts,
Vancouver, Canada

THE DECLINE in alcohol consumption detailed in Jonathan Freedland's report (Battle of bottle breaks out, June 9) misses one critical point. The US is a nation of people who love few things more than driving their cars. As courts become less tolerant of claims of innocence by reason of drunkenness, people who drive and don't wish to lose that right have been forced to change their ways.
Steve Becker,
Spokane, Washington, USA

THE MOVE by the French National Assembly to offer free public transport on days when pollution reaches danger levels (Free ride to beat pollution, June 23) is one that many large cities may soon have to copy. Reported to be uncertain how to finance the offer, the government could surely solve the problem if it progressively increased the tax on petrol, thereby discouraging the primary source of the pollution, and used the income to subsidise public transport until it achieved the desired outcome.
Ken Johnson,
Mount Pleasant, Western Australia

IT WAS good to see your criticism of the Jack Straw curfew as "merely a trendy idea picked up off the peg from the US" (Labour's curfew on common sense, June 9). It would be just as good to see criticism of the hundreds of stupid and trendy ideas, in politics, business, social work and language, picked up off the peg from the US and adopted blindly by Britain.
John Orford,
Balingasag, Misamis Oriental,
Philippines

"WITH whom should John Major deal?" you ask, "With Gerry Adams?" Yes of course, with whom else? You don't make peace by talking to your friends; you must be willing to talk with your enemies.
Clifford Story,
West Ryde, NSW, Australia

The Guardian Weekly
July 7, 1996 Vol 155 No 1

Annual subscription rates are £47 (United Kingdom); £52 (Europe inc. Eire); £55 USA and Canada; £60 Rest of World.
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In Brief

LOCAL authorities cannot withdraw community care services from the elderly and disabled because of cash shortages, the Court of Appeal ruled. The landmark ruling overturns a High Court decision in the most important case yet on the right of disabled people to services in the community.

A REPORT on judicial appointments in England and Wales by a Commons select committee shows that four out of five judges went to both public schools and Oxbridge — and that the proportion is rising.

ONE in eight women police officers in South Yorkshire is subjected to unwelcome physical or verbal advances, according to a report by the Police Federation and trade unions. Female and ethnic minority officers also face intimidation from colleagues when they become detectives.

A SCOTTISH border health authority defended its decision to advise a doctor who contracted HIV from a needle injury in Africa three years ago, to continue working while keeping his condition a secret.

AN ANONYMOUS businessman has put up a £500,000 reward for the safe return of Ben Needham, the child who went missing on the Greek island of Kos five years ago.

SEVEN people were arrested in dawn raids by police and social workers investigating a child sex ring believed to have been operating in Cornwall.

THE Home Secretary's powers to decide how long prisoners serving mandatory life sentences for murder should stay in jail are "unfair, unnecessary and anachronistic", the law reform group Justice declared.

THE police stopped and searched 690,300 people last year. The number of such street searches has risen more than sixfold since the power was given to police in the 1984 Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

NIGERIAN pro-democracy activist Abiogun Igbinidu, who has been held in a detention centre since he arrived seeking political asylum in June last year, has been given "exceptional leave" by the Home Office to stay in Britain for 12 months, when his case will be reviewed.

THE national firearms amnesty introduced after the Dunblane massacre yielded less than a third of the weapons handed in after the Hungerford tragedy in 1988.

THE veteran entertainer Alfred Marks has died of lung cancer aged 75.

Row over Blair's devolution 'U-turn'

Michael White

THE Labour leadership's decision to submit its plans for Welsh and Scottish assemblies to twin referendums of the voters last week convulsed the ranks of Labour MPs at Westminster and brought both anger and scorn down on Tony Blair's head from his political enemies.

Most Labour MPs and some frontbenchers were caught napping by the news and voiced anger at the lack of consultation. Anti-devolution MPs, some convinced that the concession may kill off devolution, were notably happier than supporters.

The plan for parallel referendums in Scotland and Wales before legislation is enacted in 1997-98 — unlike Labour's abortive referendums in 1979 — is officially intended to "entrench" the two assemblies from the threat of abolition by a subsequent Tory government.

Voting would take place within six months of a general election win. Since Scottish voters will also be asked if they want the Edinburgh assembly to enjoy tax-raising powers, some Labour strategists must be hoping that they will say No. That would relieve a Blair government of having to deal with what Tory ministers have dubbed the "tartan tax" — a potent campaign issue in the hands of the Scottish Secretary, Michael Forsyth.

Last week Mr Forsyth declared: "Labour's devolution policy is now a shambles. They are making it up as they go along."

But at the weekend Mr Blair won a crucial vote of confidence from the executive of the Scottish Labour Party.

A stormy three-hour session finally passed by 20 votes to four a resolution supporting moves to "democratically anchor the Scottish parliament by a specific positive vote by the Scottish people".

The Labour leader was at the Edinburgh meeting for more than two hours, following a day spent trying to defuse the ugly row within his party by turning his promise of referendums to the people of Scotland and Wales into a symbol of the trust he seeks to build with voters before the election.

Earlier, the pro-devolution Labour MP for Dundee, John McAllion, resigned from Mr Blair's front bench in protest at the party leadership's tactical shift in favour of a referendum on its proposed assemblies for Scotland and Wales.

He did so after the veteran ex-MP and minister, Lord Harry Ewing, had also quit a symbolic post as co-chair of the Scottish Constitutional Convention.

At Edinburgh University, Mr Blair insisted his revised package, worked on in secret for months by key allies, was a "not if, not whether, but how" blueprint. It was designed "to make devolution a reality and destroy the scurrilous and dishonest campaign against it" by John Major's ministers.

Mr Blair even insisted the vote on the Scottish assembly's tax-raising powers — the second question he also intends to submit for popular approval — will not be voted down because of "tartan tax" jibes from Mr Forsyth.

Mr McAllion and his allies fear voters are being sent a clear signal to vote No to taxing powers they consider vital to the assembly's success. Though he pledged himself to work hard for a Labour government — and Mr Blair said he still hoped to see him in his ministerial team — the pro-devolutionist MP argued the party had "lost control of our own policy".

Not only was the tax-raising power central to the assembly package agreed with other parties in the six-year Scottish Constitutional Convention, the decision to grant a two-question referendum had been imposed on the Labour party without consultation. It would lead to demands for more questions to be added, he predicted.

Road to devolution

Labour wins election. Within weeks publishes details of proposed Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly

Twin referendums in Scotland and Wales

Scotland:
'Do you back a Scottish parliament?' ☑ Yes ☐ No
'Should it have tax-raising powers?' ☑ Yes ☐ No

Wales:
'Do you back a Welsh Assembly?' ☑ Yes ☐ No

'Yes' by simple majority: Labour introduces a Bill on devolution. Promises it will be on statute book within a year of winning election

Scottish Parliament
- Based in Edinburgh
- 129 members elected by PR
- Equal number of men and women members
- Law-making powers over education, training, health, local government, industry, home and legal affairs north of border

England
- Indirectly-elected regional chambers, followed by directly elected regional assemblies where popular support is established in a referendum

Welsh Assembly
- 60 members elected under form of PR
- Can only pass secondary legislation (introduction of new regulations under existing laws)
- Will take over Welsh Office budget and functions covering agriculture, industry, economic development, transport, local government, housing, health and environmental services
- Welsh Secretary must consult assembly over Westminster's legislative programme

Tory MPs attack Portillo in armed forces housing row

Guardian Reporters

JOHN Major last week vigorously defended plans by Michael Portillo, the Defence Secretary, to sell off armed forces married quarters, in the face of objections from 65 Tory backbenchers who have demanded that MPs be allowed a vote on the decision.

Mr Major insisted in the Commons that much of the opposition to the sale of 58,000 houses was based on "misunderstandings". He denied claims that rents would rise sharply. The sell-off will raise between £1.5 billion and £2 billion.

But dissident MPs warned that they had not been satisfied by Mr Major's assurances. David Evans, Tory MP for Welwyn/Hatfield, said: "There is a great body of opinion on our side of the House that will resist it with everything we have got. I believe this will demoralise the forces."

Mr Evans and the author of the motion objecting to the sale, Julian Brazier, MP for Canterbury, are strong supporters of Mr Portillo's rightwing rival John Redwood, although they denied that the rebellion was really about undermining the Defence Secretary's support on the right of the party.

The British Legion and other service support groups also condemned the plan. The Ministry of Defence's sweetener — a promise to spend £100 million upgrading married quarters — was dismissed by Cherry Milne, chairwoman of the Army Families Federation, as a "quick fix".

Tony Blair, the Labour leader, complained that the leaseback formula was being pushed through on the cheap and with "indecent haste" to plug the Treasury's need for funds.

Mr Redwood's assertion that sitting tenants should be given extra protection against eviction after their properties have been sold to private landlords fuelled suggestions of a dispute with Mr Portillo. The two would vie for the support of the Tory right if the Conservatives lose the general election.

The defence procurement minister, James Arbuthnot, insisted that the sale of the 60,000 homes would not be used directly to finance tax cuts — an argument used privately by ministers to justify the move in an attempt to pacify the rebels.

But he stoked up the controversy by undermining the Prime Minister's pledge last week that people would not be forced to move against their will, claiming that they would be offered "a comparable property". Amid claims that the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, is seeking cuts of up to £400 million in the defence budget, he refused to deny that the MoD was vulnerable.

● The Government announced the sell-off of 700 local benefit offices and other Department of Social Security buildings in an attempt to raise an estimated £4 billion for Treasury coffers. Under the proposed deal, the Government will sell the buildings to a private-sector "partner" which will lease them back and provide full service for a period of about 20 years.

Lords vote to give asylum seekers three days' grace

Alan Travis

THE House of Lords this week blew a hole in the Government's asylum legislation as bishops warned that the withdrawal of social security benefits from most asylum seekers cast a shadow over Britain's reputation as "a compassionate and Christian country".

Peers voted by 158 votes to 155 to change a key provision of the bill so as to give asylum seekers three days' grace — instead of a single day — to claim refugee status on arrival without losing access to state help while a decision is made.

The defeat came as the Government pushed through emergency amendments to the Asylum Bill by 153 to 140 votes to overturn the reverse it suffered in the Court of Appeal last month. The judges ruled that not only was the decision to withdraw state benefits from most asylum seekers illegal in the way it was done, but also said it should not be tolerated in a civilised society.

In a further blow, the Government was later defeated again when peers voted 90 to 76, a majority of 14, to exempt domestic workers who had been abused or exploited from employment regulations affecting illegal immigrants.

Monday's vote is expected to affect a significant number of asylum seekers because Refugee Council figures show that 60 per cent lodge a claim within two days. Many genuine refugees did not claim on the day of arrival because of ignorance, confusion and disorientation.

The move was backed by three bishops and the former Master of the Rolls, Lord Donaldson. The Bishop of Lincoln said the legislation in its original form "cast a dark shadow over our claim to be a compassionate and Christian country".

After the vote Labour's home affairs spokesman, Lord McIntosh, said the effect of the defeat was to give asylum seekers three days to lodge a claim for refugee status before losing any entitlement to housing benefit, income support, child benefit and council tax benefit while their claim was determined.

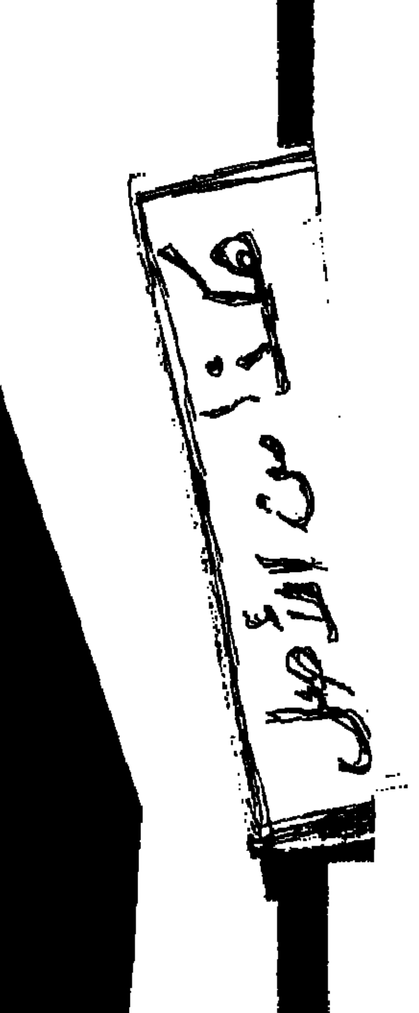
The credibility of the Government's asylum policy suffered a further blow last week when the Appeal Court ruled that the denial of temporary council housing to destitute asylum seekers was illegal.

The unanimous decision by three Appeal Court judges prompted complaints from backbench Conservative MPs that the judges were out of touch with public opinion.

The ruling found that four London councils were wrong to exclude destitute asylum seekers from shelter. They should have considered them all as "priority vulnerable cases" and offered them temporary accommodation, the judges said.

The Government's difficulties arose from the decision to withdraw housing benefit from most asylum seekers on February 8 while local authorities still have a legal duty to give temporary housing to those who are seeking refugee status. It was this legal duty that the Appeal Court upheld. The Asylum and Immigration Bill will remove that duty when it becomes law.





Overseas aid hit by cuts and lottery

Owen Bowcott

THE twin threats of competition from the National Lottery and Treasury cuts in the overseas aid budget may undermine Britain's contribution to developing countries, Voluntary Service Overseas warns in a survey report this week.

Eighty-nine per cent of those questioned for the survey, commissioned by the charity, said they would prefer to buy a lottery ticket than spare a pound for charity.

Concerned that government spending will be squeezed to provide tax cuts ahead of the next general election, British charities are launching a campaign to prevent Third World aid from slipping down the political agenda. Their manifesto, The Case For Aid, was due to be published this week.

Supported by organisations such as Cafod, Oxfam, Christian Aid, Unicef, the World Wide Fund for Nature and VSO, the report criticises the erosion of overseas development aid and the widening gap between rich and poor countries.

An £80 million cut in this year's budget for the Government's Overseas Development Administration prompted alarm.

Some charities suspect that overseas aid, which Douglas Hurd protected while foreign secretary, has become vulnerable in the tougher economic climate since Malcolm Rifkind took the post.

As well as arguing for higher spending to relieve poverty, the manifesto stresses the benefits for Britain of giving aid to deprived nations.

"Poverty and inequality fuel international problems like crime, environmental degradation, mass migration and epidemics," it says. "Aid can help reduce or manage these threats . . .

"A portion of the aid budget flows back to Britain in the shape of receipts for goods, services, jobs and research."

The manifesto calls for an increase in the budget from 0.29 per cent of GNP to an internationally agreed level of 0.7 per cent.

Britain is the world's sixth largest contributor of overseas aid, according to the ODA. "We make substantial and effective contributions to alleviating poverty and promoting sensible development abroad," a spokesman said.

Other G7 nations, such as Italy, the US and France, had made bigger cuts than Britain in their international aid budgets in the past few years.

The National Lottery has increased competition among charities for the nation's spare change.

According to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, donations are down by 8.3 per cent because of the lottery.

VSO, which has around 1,900 Britons working abroad passing on professional skills to local people, saw a 40 per cent drop in receipts from its latest fund-raising raffle.

Riot squads called to quell prison unrest

Alan Travis

THE Prison Service has faced six major incidents, half of which have involved the use of riot squads, so far this year, according to official internal intelligence documents.

The papers show that the incidents included two outbreaks of disorder at the Frankland prison, Durham, and a hostage-taking at Whitemoor in Cambridgeshire. Both jails are part of the six-strong network of dispersal prisons holding the most dangerous inmates.

The papers also disclose that, in May, 67 immigration detainees staged a protest inside Rochester prison, Kent, which lasted five hours. Nine "Tornado Units" — the codename for riot squads — were called in.

The papers, from the order and control section of the Prison Service custody group, also show that in the first five months of 1996 there have been 50 escapes involving 64 prisoners; 1,539 assaults by inmates on staff and other prisoners; 494 abscondings, mostly from open prisons; 184 temporary release failures; three rooftop demonstrations; three hostage incidents; and 31 suicides.

David Evans, the general secretary of the Prison Officers' Association, said: "I don't believe that these circumstances will get any better as more and more prisoners fill the jails combined with budget cuts. It is a cycle of despair."

Schools urged to tackle pupils' fear of bullying

Donald MacLeod

ONE in three 12-year-old schoolgirls and one in four boys are afraid of going to school because of bullying, according to a survey published last week.

Schools must tackle the unacceptably high levels of fear and doctors should be more alert to the number of children with illnesses linked to emotional distress caused by bullying, said John Balding, director of the Schools Health Education Unit at Exeter University, who surveyed nearly 5,500 pupils aged 12 to 13 in 60 schools across the country.

"I have heard horrendous stories about children hanging themselves, being beaten up, suffering broken bones. We are now hearing from lots of distressed people who want to be listened to. It is dreadful."

Children with low self-esteem were more likely to be afraid. There was a clear connection with higher frequency of illness and referral to the doctor among these children. "There are also clear links with breathing problems and loss of sleep, which may both be pointers to anxiety levels.

"The weakest get weaker. It is like the law of the jungle. Those who are more often ill and on medication are those who fear bullying. They are losing sleep, have colds and coughs, skin complaints and worry a lot."

Teachers' pets can be targets for bullies and the survey found those who spent their pocket money on school equipment or had pets were more likely to be afraid of bullying.

This climate of fear goes some way to explaining Dr Balding's previous survey, which found more than one in five secondary schoolchildren said they had recently carried an offensive weapon, including knives and guns.

"Bullying is a fact of life, but it affects kids' performance in school and it is totally undesirable," said Dr Balding. None of the schools surveyed, from Cornwall to Teesside, were in trouble spots noted for violence. Pupils with most home support who felt able to turn to both mother and father for help were least likely to fear bullying.

Bully Off, £10 from Schools Health Education Unit, University of Exeter EX1 2LU, UK

Sir Christopher Lloyd with the Verrio portrait PHOTO: DENZIL McNEELANCE

Mauritius in 'beef scam'

David Hencke

THE Indian Ocean island of Mauritius may be the centre for a world-wide corned beef scam originating in Britain, a committee of MPs revealed last week.

Customs officers discovered the scam after figures suggested that the island's 1 million inhabitants — mainly fish eaters and vegetarians — appeared to be consuming abnormally high quantities of subsidised British beef.

MPs were told that although tourists were thought to eat a lot of beef this still could not account for the passion for meat in Mauritius — before the beef export ban was imposed following the BSE scare.

The figures show that more than 9,000 tonnes of beef were consumed by the Mauritians — 4,000 tonnes coming from Britain. The export trade — 10 times Britain's beef exports to India and only just below Britain's best customer, South Africa — has led to a big Customs and Excise investigation, the Commons public accounts committee revealed.

Three British exporters have been asked to repay over £630,000 for avoiding customs duties and obtaining beef export subsidies to which they were not entitled. They were discovered taking advantage of European Union rules and using Mauritius to re-export the subsidised meat as corned beef back to Britain and other EU countries.

MPs say that tougher controls are needed to prevent similar scams re-emerging once the beef ban is lifted.

Clever chaps thank mum

Chris Mihill

SMART men owe it all to their mothers not their fathers, but dim men can also blame their mothers, a geneticist in Australia said last week.

Gillian Turner says there is growing evidence that several key genes for intelligence (and retardation) are found on the X chromosome — the one inherited from the mother.

Professor Turner, writing in the medical journal The Lancet, explains that because these genes are on the X chromosome, a single mutation will have more effect on a man than a woman. This is because a woman inherits two X chromosomes — one from each parent — so if she gets a mutant gene on an X chromosome from one parent, there is a good chance she will inherit a normal gene on the X chromosome from the other parent — thus reducing the mutant's impact.

However, men have only one X chromosome, inherited from their mothers, so a mutant gene on it is likely to be the only one and, unopposed, will have its full effect. As a result mutations in intelligence genes on an X-chromosome will tend to have more effect in a man than a woman — explaining why men suffer mental retardation more often, and possibly why some are extraordinarily intelligent, she says.

Professor Turner, from the Hunter genetics institute, Newcastle, New South Wales, states: "The male with his single X-chromosome is likely to be more affected by either advantageous genes on [it] or by deleterious mutational events, which may explain the difference in IQ distribution between the sexes."

She says males who want bright children should worry less about a woman's sexual attractiveness and more about her mind — and her mother's mind.

For women, though, she asserts: "The female has more freedom of choice; she may be driven to mate by her partner's physique but the brightness of her children lies mainly within her.

'Louche' royal back at court

Dan Glaister

A PORTRAIT showing King Charles II looking "engagingly louche" which disappeared from Windsor Castle last century has been bought by the Queen.

The 32in by 27in portrait by the Italian artist Antonio Verrio, painted in the late 17th century, was spotted last month at a sale in Vienna by a London art dealer, Philip Mould.

The picture had been wrongly catalogued as a portrait of King Leopold I of Belgium.

Mr Mould bought the portrait for £8,000, well above the auctioneer's estimate of £1,000. Sir Christopher Lloyd, Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures, then bought it for around £75,000. The painting is now thought to be worth £300,000.

The portrait was originally part of a large mural in St George's Hall, Windsor by Verrio, one of Charles II's favourite artists. He came to England in 1672 and received royal commissions for Windsor, Whitehall and Hampton Court between 1675 and 1684.

Sir Christopher said: "This is an exciting find and it is wonderfully symbolic that this portrait will return to Windsor Castle on completion of the restoration of the areas damaged by fire in November 1992."

The portrait was probably removed by George IV, a Hanoverian, who may not have appreciated the arch expression of his Stuart forebear.

George IV disliked much of Verrio's work and commissioned a new design for St George's Hall in 1829. That design, by the architect Sir Jeffrey Wyatville, lasted until the fire in 1992.

Kathryn Barron, a curator of paintings with the Royal Collection, said: "A lot of what survives was painted late in [Verrio's] career. He went blind and probably should have stopped painting then."

Irish reporter who put the story first

Maggie O'Kane salutes the journalist Veronica Guerin, killed because she exposed the truth about Dublin's underworld

TEN miles outside Dublin at traffic lights no one should remember, a battered beige Mercedes pulled up and a grinning five-year-old boy, who understood nothing, tossed out a bunch of yellow carnations. His mother crossed herself and turned left for Clondalkin, a Dublin suburb.

The Clondalkin traffic lights on the Naas dual carriage way is a shabby place to die. As she drove along it last Wednesday afternoon, two men on a motorbike, wearing white crash helmets, intercepted her car. One fired a handgun, killing her instantly.

She was in her red Opel Calibra, on her way from the bleak Naas courthouse where she had thanked the judge for imposing a £25 fine for driving at 103mph and not displaying her tax. She was, they said, in good form — she had got off lightly, was going into the office. There was a story to finish.

Veronica Guerin always had a story to finish. They were not always about criminals or drugs but they were invariably big stories. She was driven by what drives most of us — a mixture of deep insecurity, a need to keep shining in the job, ego, and a notion that maybe sometimes it did some good.

She did stories about the church, corruption in high places, political dirty tricks and the sexiest stories of them all: drugs and crime. But in the words of one man who spoke to her on the morning of her death, she was "careless is not the word I'm looking for, reckless".

Veronica Guerin had no boundaries. "Fuck him," she told a police contact who warned her over her last investigation into a heroin dealer who was sentenced last month to 20 years' jail. "I'd talk to her about something at midnight and she would call me at 6.30 in the morning because she had just got on to something. She was driven."

Even when her front door was forced in one morning last January by a helmeted figure who ran a gun over her body and shot her through the leg, she was "shaken a little while and then she was back as king of the castle". She visited the criminal godfathers on her crutches and warned them she was not afraid. She talked over the dangers with her husband Graham Turley, and he backed her. Her newspaper installed a security system and the Gardai gave her protection until she tired of them cramping her style.

For three years the investigative reporter, aged 36, had moved swiftly across Dublin's underworld. In the late 1970s it was a world that had rules. Even the criminal class had rules. They carried out armed robberies, killed each other but there was still a code of honour. Killing women did not fit into that code. The change began when Ireland was introduced to heroin in 1979 following a spate of armed robberies on pharmaceutical companies.

In those days families like the Dunnes, the inner city families of small-time criminals, began building their drug-money houses in the Dublin mountain. They were gawky beginners. Larry, Seamus, and Flasher Dunne were convicted of heroin dealing but they did not kill journalists who talked to them.

The world that Veronica Guerin came to investigate in the 1990s had changed. Heroin and crack were into their third generation. In a Dublin flat, Linda Dixon, aged 18, was assuring her uncle Jem that she was "coming off the gear" while he lay dying from Aids, lecturing her. He had one leg. The other had been amputated because of gangrene caused by 20 years of shooting up.

Veronica Guerin came late to journalism and to the Dublin of the Dixons. She loved the buzz, the excitement of a good story.

When she exposed Martin Cahill, the General, a heroin dealer and godfather of crime, the hitmen came after her, sent in by a rage fuelled not by an exposé of drug dealing but because she had written that Cahill was unfaithful to his wife.

The names of the underworld players are almost comic: the Warehouseman, the Coach, the Monk, and the Walrus. The prime suspects for her murder are two men she threatened to expose for heroin dealing. They complained to the police that their children would get hassled at school.

Veronica Guerin's death has dominated Ireland. The Taoiseach (prime minister) said it was an attack on democracy and there are 40 detectives hunting her murderer.

At the spot where she died, a bouquet of red carnations lay. It read: "To Veronica — thank you for making a difference." It's not clear yet whether she did, in a city where even criminals were once expected to be nice guys.

A woman taxi driver who stopped where the flowers were laid said the country was shocked because she was a woman, because she was very brave — and because there are no rules any more.

John Mulholland adds: Veronica Guerin's reputation was not only based on crime investigations. She famously tracked down the Bishop of Galway, Eamonn Casey, to Ecuador, where he had gone into hiding after the revelation of his relationship with an American divorcee. She did not write about her first meetings with the fugitive bishop, instead using them to build up a rapport which later paid dividends when he granted her his first post-flight interview, published in her then paper, the Sunday Tribune.

But, after being shot and then beaten up, Guerin became even better known for exposing crooks. Admitting that initially she was motivated by "the buzz", the thrill of the chase, she said that from 1994 onwards, with the growth of a drug-centred culture, her motives altered: "I haven't given up because it's genuinely a job that has to be done. I could say I'm motivated about this because I want to see us address the socio-economic problems but that's not it. It just makes me sick that these bastards make money through the deaths of others, and they don't give a shit what they're doing to young kids."

And now journalism has lost one of its most unassuming and driven individuals. She was a brave and brilliant reporter. In an age when journalism sometimes seems overly preoccupied with the trivial, her words actually mattered. She tackled real lives and real injustices.

Veronica Guerin, journalist, born July 6, 1959; died June 26, 1996



Veronica Guerin in hospital after an earlier warning shooting at her Dublin home

Brave foot soldier for truth

EDITORIAL

MORE than 20 journalists around the world have been assassinated since 1996 began. They have mostly died in Africa or South America or amid the chaotic detritus of the old Soviet empire. They were doing what they perceived to be their job: reporting, investigating, turning over stones. We salute them, of course: but a touch ritually. They do not report from the democratic comfort of the European Union. They work for papers far away. But Veronica Guerin reported in Dublin, for the Sunday Independent. And now she is dead too, murdered in her car — shot for the second time in her short career, and this time over and over again, to kill.

Veronica Guerin was a brilliant reporter. She, more than any other, exposed the brutal sub-world of Dublin gangland, a terrain of drugs and terror which the police seem unable to cross. Her stories made Ireland think afresh about the kind of country it is becoming, with dire echoes back across the sea to cities like Liverpool. Her work was necessary. She discovered what nobody else had discovered. She discomfited and shamed authority in so doing. She made terrible enemies.

Veronica Guerin would be the last to see her death as some special horror, inviting special condemnation. She was, ironically, due to speak in London last week at an international gathering examining the problems of "journalists under fire". She saw herself only as one among many. And that is the best way to remember her: as a foot soldier for truth in a battlefield where the troops are too often a rabble.

The important thing for Ireland is that her work goes on. And there is an important thing for newspapers too. Sometimes, too often, we forget the core of the work we have to do, the real reason for our existence. Veronica Guerin reminds us of the reason why.

Giving 007 a licence to thrill

Cubby Broccoli

CUBBY BROCCOLI, the producer of the James Bond films who has died aged 87, was sometimes affectionately nicknamed The Godfather. It was mostly taken as a compliment. What was certain was that he was the apparently benign, slow and sure partner in the duo who first brought Ian Fleming's James Bond to the screen in the early 1960s.

Whereas the Canadian Harry Saltzman was small, aggressive, intellectually curious and likely to become bored with any enterprise after a while, the New Yorker of Italian extraction was large, portly, paternal and infinitely patient.

Though he might not have succeeded in making his first Bond, Dr No, without the partnership with Saltzman, who temporarily held the film rights, he remained producer of the Bonds long after Saltzman.

Albert Romolo Broccoli grew up in the Depression when his civil engineer father had to work as a bricklayer. Broccoli first worked for an uncle, Pasquale de Cicco, who kept a 25-acre farm, on which he introduced broccoli to America, calling it by the Broccoli family name. Cubby had to wash, crate and take vegetables to Harlem markets on a horse cart. Later he worked for a cousin as manager of the Long Island Casket Company, makers of coffins.

On a holiday in Hollywood in 1933, he decided that California, and in particular Hollywood, might hold more attractive options. He was soon back there, selling Christmas trees from a street corner caravan, becoming a salesman for hairnets in San Francisco, and working for a Beverly Hills jeweller before getting a job sorting mail at the 20th Century Fox studios.

Broccoli had arrived, even if no one except himself seemed to notice. It was 1941 before he talked his way into becoming assistant director to Howard Hawks on Howard Hughes's production of The Outlaw, featuring the busty charms of Jane Russell. The entry of America into the second world war gave him another opportunity to prove his toughness. In the US Navy for four years, he ended up a lieutenant in Special Services.

After the war he changed tack, and worked for Charles Feldman, one of Hollywood's leading agents but it was becoming increasingly obvious to Broccoli that it would not be easy for him to set up as a producer in the US, so he came to Britain in 1951, founded Warwick Films with Irving Allen, calling on the services of Alan Ladd for Hell Below Zero, The Black Knight and The Red Beret, and other contacts such as Rita Hayworth, Robert Mitchum and Jack Lemmon.

In 1960 Broccoli split with Allen and, with his share of the business, tried to set up a Bond film. None of the major studios seemed interested unless Broccoli had the rights. At about the same time, Saltzman had paid Fleming $50,000 dollars for a six-month option on all Bond stories except Casino Royale. Saltzman, who only had 28 days left to run on his option, did a 50-50 deal.

Although a number of well-known directors declined to direct Dr No the film was a smash hit, partly thanks to the effectiveness of Sean Connery as the stylishly ruthless Bond.

With the exception of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, a Fleming story for children, Broccoli thereafter concentrated on the Bond films, whereas Saltzman made many others. Both were agreed, when Connery bowed out, that Bond must remain British, telling United Artists firmly that Paul Newman, Burt Reynolds or Steve McQueen really would not do as the essentially British shaken-but-not-stirred agent.

After 25 years spent amassing a personal fortune of £30 million in Britain, Broccoli went home to Los Angeles in 1977 for tax reasons, but continued to make films. The recent GoldenEye was the last of his 17 Bonds, which together earned more than $1 billion at the box office throughout the world.

Dennis Barker

Cubby (Albert Romolo) Broccoli, movie producer, born April 5, 1909; died June 27, 1996

A commitment to Bosnia

RADOVAN KARADZIC is adept at waiting till the very end before he jumps. By renouncing his presidential powers while being re-elected to lead the ruling Serb Democratic party, he has done little more than to make fools of the G7 summit and its stern "ultimatum". Once again the international community has to decide how much harder to push for implementation of the fine principles to which it signed up in the Dayton peace agreement. The same problem is also raised by elections at the weekend in the divided city of Mostar, where militant Croats in the western sector have already reduced to shreds the multi-ethnic ideal.

The central issue is not Mr Karadzic but whether the outside world settled in reality at Dayton for a permanently divided Bosnia, or is still striving to reverse the consequences of the civil war. Toppling Mr Karadzic only makes sense, and is only likely to be achieved, if it forms part of a determined effort to roll back the frontiers. So far, Dayton has only worked at the military level, where it satisfies the needs of the exhausted communities on both sides for a return to peace. The restoration of multi-ethnic co-operation and understanding, which would be the essential building block for any future reconstruction of Bosnian nationhood, has hardly begun. Instead, the dividing lines have become still sharper on the map, as refugees are denied permission even to visit let alone return home and surviving minority communities are cleared away. Instead of becoming one country with two entities, Bosnia has emerged as two countries under one figleaf. Last month in Florence, the peace implementation conference heard from the international mediator Carl Bildt of "troubling evidence of a trend . . . to institutionalise ethnic separation". Its monitors on the ground reported that the "neutral political environment" which Dayton required for elections did not exist in any part of Bosnia. Yet it still went ahead with the decision to hold elections in September, swayed by the US argument that postponing them would only aggravate the conditions. This seems contrary to the natural logic that after so much conflict more, rather than less, time is indeed to improve the conditions. Outside the conference room, the ticking clock of Bill Clinton's timetable was only too audible.

The message from the G7 at the weekend was that "we want Mr Karadzic . . . out of power and out of influence". Mr Bildt was initially optimistic but soon realised that Mr Karadzic was not renouncing the post, only the powers that go with it. It is hard to see how Mr Karadzic's political influence can be cancelled. Earlier international attempts to foster an alternative political centre in Banja Luka have been unsuccessful. The Bosnian Serb opposition, hopelessly fragmented, is unable to combat the orchestrated politics of Pale. The outside world can only play a limited part in reversing the ethnicisation of Bosnia. But the most positive step would be to scrap the pull-out imposed by an entirely different set of political calculations elsewhere and for the international community to commit itself, quite simply, to maintain the commitment.

The nuclear test of time

THE QUEST for a complete ban on nuclear testing has reached its most critical moment in more than four decades since it was first proposed by India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. Three times since then, progress towards a comprehensive test ban treaty (CTBT) has been thwarted by the nuclear powers. Now, at last, a mixture of strategic calculation and public pressure has brought them round, only to face another block. Last week's deadline at Geneva has been postponed to allow a month for delicate diplomacy to bridge the gap with the treaty's strongest opponent, which just happens to be . . . India. The irony is almost too obvious. Yet Delhi's argument should not be summarily dismissed even though the motives of the threshold nuclear power making it are suspect.

India has argued that it is illegitimate for "some countries to rely on nuclear weapons for their security while denying this right to others". The governments of the nuclear five — though not necessarily their generals or scientists — now believe they can maintain, perhaps improve, their arsenals through computer and other techniques without the need for testing. That is why they accept a treaty that may reduce the opportunity for "horizontal proliferation" by other powers.

Yet the nuclear five have shown no signs of taking seriously the commitment, made in last year's Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), to pursue with determination the ultimate goal of abolishing all nuclear weapons. Indeed, it is doubtful if any of them seriously believes in the goal for which they signed up. India says this is cynical and wrong. The CTBT was to be a stepping stone to disarmament, not a device for freezing inequality. That is why Delhi will sign only if the treaty sets a date for total abolition. It also objects to a clause requiring India to ratify the treaty for it to take effect: other international treaties merely provide that a minimum number of countries should sign first. This clause has been pushed with special vigour by Britain, and the suspicion lurks that it may be partly a means of postponing a deal to which it agreed late and with reluctance.

There is sympathy among Western researchers for the Indian argument: the London-based British American Security Information Council says that the nuclear-weapons states should commit themselves now to begin talks on eliminating their arsenals, and should publicly announce that in the meantime they will forgo the development of any new nuclear weapons.

But critical scholars from India regard Delhi's case as specious. In a comprehensive survey just published by the Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik accuse India of having abandoned the high moral ground as soon as a CTBT was no longer a distant prospect. India's real motive, they say, is to avoid signing away its capacity to build a credible deterrent to Beijing. Pakistan's nuclear potential, though more rudimentary than India's, is also an obvious factor.

Where does this leave the CTBT? There is a deal to be struck in which India accepts something short of a time-tabled commitment to disarmament while Britain and others drop their insistence on Indian ratification. To miss the deadline set by last year's NPT would be to forfeit a historic moment that may not recur for many years.

Motherland calls

IN LESS THAN a year, Hong Kong will wake up under Chinese rule or — as some will prefer to say — rejoin the motherland. The number of Hong Kongers who, as the time approaches, feel a surge of patriotism — whether spontaneously or to please the mainland — should not be underestimated. Hong Kong was acquired by force in 1842 at the end of a war inflicted on China to prevent it from banning the import of opium, and to compel it to open its doors. It was a squalid episode in British history and a Chinese leadership that has replaced socialism with patriotism as the ruling ethic will not allow anyone to forget it. But appeals to history do not address the concern as to whether there will be a "smooth transition" that preserves Hong Kong's freedoms and the rule of law. The 1984 Sino-British agreement was concluded with that objective, above all, in mind. It might have worked if the Beijing massacre had not devastated confidence in Hong Kong and, largely as a result, the last colonial governor had not felt impelled to prompt a more active package of democratic reform. Yet, since Hong Kong's endgame coincided with China's own terminal dynastic politics, the chances of persuading Beijing to give more democratic guarantees were always slim.

The handover may well surprise most people by seeming to go quite smoothly. Beijing will probably take some pains to avoid any immediate shocks. Hong Kong officials will be making their own tacit adjustments: even Hong Kong democrats may wait and see. The economy, having discounted its own worries, may look surprisingly healthy.

Where it is going badly may take longer to emerge but there are some intelligent predictions. A report by the Hong Kong Journalists Association identifies crucial areas where China has said it will dilute legislation on civil liberties, and documents action taken by Beijing to blacklist local media and harass Hong Kong journalists working in China. The HKJA appeals directly to the Chinese government, urging it not to tamper with existing law but to honour its pledge of freedom of expression. The address is significant: from now, we should send our letters and faxes not to Government House in Hong Kong but to the State Council in Beijing.

Dangers of supping with the Americans

David Hirst

THREE years ago I ran into a young Saudi pilot at the giant airbase where last week's truck bomb wrought its deadly havoc. From his combat uniform to his transatlantic drawl he could have been American through and through. But it was some very anti-American things he had to say as he climbed into the cockpit of his British Tornado fighter bomber.

He spoke of Operation Desert Storm and the time when he had joined the Western "allies" in bombing raids on Iraq. "Look," he said, "Saddam was my enemy then. But now, when that guy turns on his radar, you hit him from right here in Dhahran. I don't like that. It is time you did the same to the Israelis."

That encapsulates the contradiction at the heart of Saudi public opinion. On the one hand many Saudis, especially the Western-educated among them, have a real affinity for the West, even if it is not always the best of Western ways to which they most eagerly take. They crave its commodities. They depend on its technology and, like that pilot, they take immense pride in their mastery of it.

On the other hand, they often frankly loathe the US's policies and none more than its seemingly incorrigible bias in favour of Israel.

The Saudis may not have any particular liking for the Palestinians as individuals. They mostly know them as expatriates working in the kingdom, and they know that, like millions of others, the only reason they are there is to take their money off them. But that does not mean that, as Arabs and Muslims, they have no feeling for the Palestinian cause. It is often surprising, in fact, how strongly they do feel about it.

And it is not just Palestine: it could be almost anything. The Saudis have even less love of President Saddam Hussein, the monster who might have laid waste to their country, and, like the pilot, most of them supported the presence of half a million Western troops on their soil during Desert Storm. But they resent the treatment that the West continues to mete out to its former enemy, not only because the Iraqi people do not deserve to suffer interminably for the sins of their ruler, but because the West is simultaneously so tolerant of an Israel which, in their eyes, is no less a persistent aggressor than Iraq and no less a flagrant violator of United Nations resolutions.

It is not only as Arabs and Muslims, it is as oil-rich Saudis too. Together with Kuwait and other Gulf states, Saudi Arabia had to foot the bill for every penny of the US contribution to the liberation of Kuwait. It drained their coffers. Yet the Saudis have gone on paying through the nose for yet more of those expensive, shiny new weapons which Desert Storm itself proved that they cannot properly absorb, or do not need, because the arms suppliers themselves would automatically insist on coming to their rescue in any new emergency.

The resentment runs so deep that when, last November, five Americans died in the first such act of Islamist terror, a great many Saudis, Westernised secular liberals among them, were not noticeably unhappy about it. "The Americans", said one, "should have seen this for what it was: a wake-up call. I, for my part, liked the message. I just did not like the means of delivery."

The House of Saud is deeply aware of the dilemma this contradiction poses. It would like to think, of course, that the anti-US terror is the work of foreign agents, with Iran or Iraq as their likely sponsors. That was its working assumption after last November's bombing. So it was with undisguised sorrow that the interior minister, Prince Nayif, announced the truth: four Saudis born and bred were to be beheaded for their "anti-Islamic" crime.

The regime knows that it is a vicious circle, that the more trouble it faces from its home-grown Islamic militants, the more it has to rely, in the final analysis, on a US protection that only aggravates the trouble.

That is why, on general Arab and Muslim issues — but especially on Palestine — it tries to be far less accommodating than the US would like it to be. For example, it has acted as a brake on the process of Arab "normalisation" with Israel. Two Gulf states, Oman and Qatar, are forging economic ties with Israel. But Saudi Arabia itself strongly disapproves. It is in much the same spirit that it backs Syria in its rejection of the peace that Israel offers it, and it played a leading role in last month's Arab summit.

"I APPRECIATE Saudi Arabia's position when you compare it with that of so many others," said a Palestinian living in the kingdom. "But it cannot behave otherwise if it wants to retain its key place in the Islamic world and to head off the threat from Iran and the real fanatics."

Where the Saudi regime cannot prevent a US policy about which it has serious misgivings, it seeks to belittle its own association with it. That is why, for example, it has never formally admitted that the US, British and French planes which police Iraq's southern "aerial exclusion zone" fly out of Dhahran airbase for the purpose. All the public is supposed, officially, to know is that they do so from "somewhere in the region".

It is an embarrassed sophistry that fools no one — and least of all, of course, the Islamic fanatics — as the latest atrocity so amply proves.

But what the House of Saud most needs is something that only its US ally can furnish, which is a fundamental change of policy on Israel, and all those Arab and Muslim issues which, in Saudi eyes, are more or less intimately related to it.

That came out clearly when, in May, the US embassy in Riyadh issued a warning to 35,000 Americans living in the kingdom. They should take special precautions, it said, because there were good reasons to suspect that the Islamic terrorists were about to strike again. And it was said that among the terrorists' grievances, this time, were Israel's Grapes of Wrath assault on Lebanon, the massacre of innocents at Qana and the irrefutable evidence this furnished that the US "hates the Arabs and Muslims".

Leading nations 'fail world's poor'

Richard Thomas

JAPAN and Canada were singled out at the Group of Seven's economic summit at Lyon last week as having particularly low imports from poor countries. They were urged by the European Union to slash tariffs on goods imported from the developing world to allow them to trade their way out of poverty.

After the G7's failure to agree to the sale of gold for debt relief, the European Commission president, Jacques Santer, warned that the failure of poor countries to benefit from globalisation could undermine the free trade agenda.

"There are some countries simply stuck at the bottom of the heap," a Commission spokesman said. "If we are to push on with the liberalisation, they have to be brought on board. That was our message."

Although Mr Santer admitted the EU needed to cut barriers to import goods from poor nations, he singled out Japan and Canada as having particularly low levels of imports from poor countries. A senior member of the Commission's delegation said: "The Canadians and Japanese are the worst culprits. They need to do more to use trade to help these countries."

With aid agencies condemning the lack of concrete action on Third World debt, Kenneth Clarke, the UK chancellor, put a brave face on the failure to force through the British-backed gold sales initiative and pledged to keep pushing the plan at the autumn meetings of the International Monetary Fund.

Treasury officials talked up hopes of a commitment before the end of the year — pointing to a call in the G7 economic communiqué for the IMF to "optimise its reserve management".

Insiders said this was diplomatic code for action, because 90 per cent of the fund's assets are held in gold. With six out of seven leaders now supporting the policy, they said some progress later in the year was almost certain.

But lobby groups said the summit had produced little for the world's poorest countries. Andrew Simms, a spokesman for Christian Aid, said: "This is another case of all words and no deeds. President Chirac billed this summit as a landmark in relations between rich and poor nations. By those standards it has been an abject failure."

Ed Mayo, director of the New Economics Foundation, said: "Debt has been on the communiqué of every summit since 1983. This is probably the first one which amounts to a step backwards."

The G7 leaders promised more action by next autumn and urged donor countries to focus their lending and aid on the very poorest countries and promote private sector and export-oriented activity.

Caught on the horns of a global dilemma

COMMENT
Larry Elliott

ANYBODY who has experienced the agony of negative equity will know how the heavily indebted countries of the developing world feel. Keeping up with the interest payments is like running through treacle, a soul-destroying and seemingly endless process that redistributes money from the have-nots to the haves.

In truth, the situation of poor countries is even more acute than it is for homeowners, not least because there is a far greater chance of house prices floating individuals off the rocks of debt than commodity prices doing the same for nations dependent on exports of primary products.

The world's richer nations know this. They are well aware that the 20 or so poorest countries — mainly but not exclusively in sub-Saharan Africa — are caught in a debt trap from which there is no escape. They recognise also that sustainable development requires these nations to spend money on health, education and basic infrastructure — money that is at present sluicing down the debt drain.

Yet, as the G7 summit at Lyon showed only too clearly, there is a twin paradox here. Debt is just one issue where the world's most powerful economic nations can see that hands-on action and co-operation would be beneficial. Laissez-faire is not the solution to the West's relationship with Zambia or Uganda, any more than it is for preventing the spread of international terrorism or ousting Radovan Karadzic from his Bosnian power base.

At the same time, the G7 is in thrall to an economic philosophy which has laissez-faire as its foundation stone. The rich nations see globalisation — which has leeched power from them — as inevitable and the best guarantor of rising prosperity and freedom.

But there is more. Debt relief on the scale required to make a real difference to developing countries would mean a phenomenal transfer of resources from North to South. It would be an egalitarian gesture on the part of countries which have made a virtue out of rising inequality in their own societies over the past 20 years.

It is quite a dilemma and one that finds the G7 still stumbling around in the dark. The Germans did their best to stop the sale of the International Monetary Fund's gold to provide soft loans to developing countries, while France's Jacques Chirac was calling for a security fence to be thrown around the globalisation process.

A couple of years ago, the German attitude would have seemed sound and defensible. In Lyon, there were a number of reasons why Chirac caught the prevailing mood.

First, a global economy without barriers may make it easier for capital to move around: it also makes it much harder to prevent revenues that would have been paying for schools and hospitals being siphoned off into unregulated offshore tax havens. Even Britain is concerned about the popularity of these niche bolt-holes.

Second, globalisation sits uneasily with the institutions that were set up in the aftermath of the second world war to ensure that the US and its key allies could regulate and oversee the development of Western capitalism. If the West really is impotent, there is less justification for its stranglehold on the multilateral institutions.

Third, even within the rich West there have been signs that the growth of income inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient, may be stretching social cohesion to breaking point. If trickle-down is to be operated on a global scale, the size of the Gini coefficient would have to be astronomical.

One answer to these developments is to say we should reject globalisation entirely and hand power back to the nation state. This is what Pat Buchanan has argued, with some success, in the United States. But disengagement is far from the only option, and attention recently has focused on three options — halting the process, slowing it down, or reshaping it.

Evidence of the "thus far and no further" approach has been seen with the campaign to stop World Bank dams in Nepal and the growth of Local Exchange Trading Schemes (Lets) as a means of giving back to local communities some control over their lives.

The attempts to block Nafta and the Uruguay round are the best examples of trying to put the brakes on globalisation and take a more gradualist approach to economic change, while the drive to insert social clauses and environmental treaties into the new World Trade Organisation are both part of the emphasis on reshaping.

There is no sign that the G7 is prepared to mount a campaign to stop or slow globalisation, but Mr Chirac's concern for the dignity of labour, Bill Clinton's crusade against terrorism and Kenneth Clarke's proposals for debt relief are all encouraging proof of the desire to reshape.

THE prerequisite for any reshaping is debt relief, and the G7 knows it. While there is an argument that writing off debts runs into the problem of moral hazard — that you are encouraging a spendthrift approach — this seems rather less relevant than the fact that between 1990 and 1993 Zambia spent 35 times as much on debt payments as it did on education.

The sale of IMF gold is actually a pretty poor way of providing help, because the offer of soft loans through the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility does nothing to reduce the overhang of developing country debt. Rather, it gives the IMF an arm-lock on the debtor nations, forcing them to accept six years of Draconian adjustment before they qualify for loans on easier terms.

The rationale for selling the IMF gold would be clearer if the proceeds were going to debt-forgiveness. Aid agencies have calculated that the sale of 12 per cent of the IMF's $40 billion gold reserves could wipe out the IMF debt of the world's 20 poorest countries.

That in turn might be the catalyst for the Paris club of creditor countries to take a more generous approach to their debts. The key here is to increase the portion of a country's debt that can be written off.

A really generous programme of debt relief would end the ludicrous situation where the poorest nations are paying more to the multilateral institutions than they are receiving in aid. But on its own it would not be enough.

There needs to be a commitment to transfer resources to the South. This is where the G7 — committed as it is to budgetary stringency — starts to have second thoughts. With the notable exception of countries such as Norway, aid budgets have been cut to keep budget deficits down.

But every idea will be stillborn without the final part of the jigsaw: the inclusion of the developing countries in the decision-making process. Like the United Nations, where the veto for the permanent members of the Security Council is an anachronism, an overhaul of the G7 is long overdue. If globalisation is here to stay, it should be reflected in global institutions which allow developing nations to put down the begging bowl and take their place at the rich man's table.

ILLUSTRATION: DAVID SIMONDS (WITH APOLOGIES TO ESCHER)

Anti-crime plan turned on terrorists

Richard Norton-Taylor, and Ian Black in Lyon

AS THE political leaders of the most powerful industrial countries trumpeted a new crusade against terrorism last week they privately acknowledged a growing threat from extremist dissident groups, including further attacks against Western targets in Saudi Arabia.

The 40-point anti-terrorist plan announced at the G7 summit in Lyon was a political imperative for President Clinton after last week's bomb attack which killed 19 US airmen at the American military base near Dhahran.

It emerged that the 40 points were prepared by a meeting of G7 senior experts in Paris on April 12, to deal with "transnational organised crime" rather than terrorism — though some of the issues and methods are clearly relevant to both. The word terrorism does not appear in the document.

Most of the proposals, including measures to combat terrorist fund-raising, hinder weapons supplies and tighten border controls, had already been agreed in principle, notably at the Paris meeting.

They will be discussed further at a meeting of interior and foreign ministers this month in Paris, where Britain is likely to point to its plans for a new conspiracy law to prevent foreigners seeking asylum in Britain if their activities are considered detrimental to national interests.

Other ideas, rehashed at the G7 summit, include new extradition measures, more security measures at air and sea ports, and more effective intelligence co-operation.

Terence Taylor, assistant director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, said that the Dhahran bombings could have one significant practical effect: the Irish republican lobby in the United States would become less influential as the impact of terrorist attacks came closer to home.

Paul Rogers, professor of peace studies at Bradford University, said governments were trying to control terrorist threats without properly understanding them. "They must start looking at some of the causes."

Western diplomats concede that the problems are compounded by the opening of borders and an increasingly global economy. "People are moved, money is moved, weapons are moved across borders," the Canadian foreign minister, Lloyd Axworthy, said, urging more intelligence co-operation.

While the US and Britain co-operate closely on intelligence, they are reluctant to share it with others, notably Germany, whose intelligence community enjoys close links with Iran.

The G7 leaders were attacked by their Green shadows, The Other Economic Summit, for putting the fight against terrorism at the top of their summit agenda at the expense of poverty and nuclear hazards.

"This is an outrageous gesture showing inhuman priorities," said Jakob von Exhul, the TOES leader. "It shows a desire to turn away from problems that make one million times more victims than terrorism," he said. The poor countries' foreign debt was "the modern form of slavery".

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Airline deal may leave Virgin high and dry

Joanna Walters reports from Washington on the transatlantic threat facing Richard Branson

VIRGIN Atlantic Airways is at a turning point. The airline has a larger-than-life image, mainly because of the publicity-seeking instincts of chairman Richard Branson. But its profits have always been fragile. And Virgin now risks being wiped off the map if British Airways and American Airlines' proposed partnership goes ahead.

The concerns are not just a product of the Virgin publicity machine. A source at Delta Airlines believes that if BA and AA are allowed to co-operate his company will cease to make money flying between the UK and the US.

Transatlantic routes are only a fraction of Delta's business, but they are Virgin's lifeblood, and Branson does not want to spend the rest of his life bankrolling the airline from other parts of the Virgin group or his personal wealth.

"It would completely screw us," said Branson last week. "I do not think it would be the death of the airline, but it would be a real body-blow."

BA and AA propose to co-ordinate their flights and fares across the Atlantic and market each other's US domestic, European and worldwide networks. This includes the services of partners US Air, America West, Canadian Airlines, Qantas, Deutsche BA and French TAT.

The deal would be a leading example of the industry trend towards global partnerships: offering the world on a single ticket, with common quality standards and reservations systems in all markets.

But it would also give the pair control of 60 per cent of the transatlantic market from the UK and domination in the US and European domestic markets.

The Office of Fair Trading, the European Commission competition team and the US Departments of Justice and Transport are all probing the deal and the airlines face a troubled summer waiting for the first puff of smoke from the authorities.

"There would be a massive reduction in profits if the BA-AA deal went through," Branson said last week. "If profits dropped from £70 million to £10 million, which is not unrealistic, we would think twice about investing further in expansion."

From its start in 1984, Virgin Atlantic built up its turnover to around £250 million, with profits of around £7 million a year by early 1991. But it lost £19 million in 1991-92 and £6 million in 1992-93 on turnover of around £400 million. The industry wondered if it could survive.

Virgin did survive and predicts a record profit of £70 million, excluding the Virgin Holidays tour operator, on around £800 million of sales in the 10 months to August 31, 1996.

BA says its deal is competitive and fares across the Atlantic will come down. Virgin says they will go up. If so, won't everyone, including Virgin, just make more money at the public's expense?

Virgin says not, because BA and American would use their dominant position to tie travel agents and corporate business travel contractors into commission deals based on market share — so-called fidelity rebates.

Virgin claims BA's stranglehold on the travel trade is already damaging its business. It has made a complaint to Brussels which is being investigated, and has an anti-trust suit against BA in the US.

BA denies malpractice. However, BA and American are proposing that regulations be relaxed to allow all comers from the US into London's Heathrow airport as a condition of the deal.

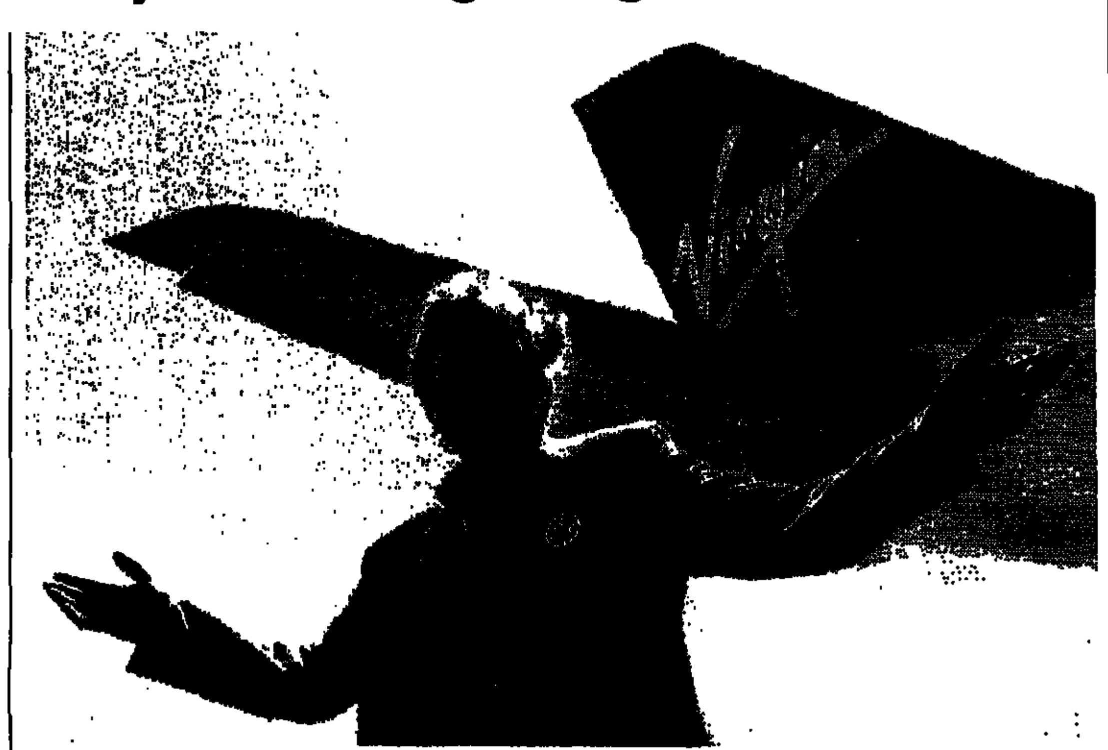
US rivals say that as Heathrow is severely congested, BA and AA should be made to give up some of their routes to free capacity. TWA is already seeking permission to serve Heathrow from New York.

It is understood that Delta could shortly ask to fly from Heathrow to Atlanta, New York and Los Angeles — and will publicly oppose the BA-AA deal unless special provisions are made to allow US newcomers into Heathrow. Continental Airlines and Northwest also want access.

Confiscating capacity and sharing it out would open up real multi-airline transatlantic competition from Heathrow and quell fears that BA-AA could develop a monopoly.

Branson wants to kill the deal but would be prepared to accept it if BA were made to give up 25 per cent of its Heathrow capacity, with half of it going to US airlines and half to Virgin.

BA chief executive Robert Ayling says he is not prepared to give up anything. The airline's ability to thrive amid global competition and offer its passengers the best service is at stake. — *The Observer*



Looking on the bright side . . . Virgin boss Richard Branson is predicting a record profit of £70 million for the 10 months up to the end of August
PHOTOGRAPH: RICK T WILKING

In Brief

TWENTY-FOUR European nations announced in Brussels a $2.4 billion scheme called Medea to recapture a share of the microelectronics industry from the Asian Tiger economies.

JAPAN'S unemployment rate rose to a record 3.5 per cent in May, boosted by young people who have failed to land jobs after leaving school in March.

HALF of Britain now depends on financial services rather than on manufacturing, according to an official digest of economic and social data.

ALMOST 2,000 UK jobs were lost when the shoe company C & J Clark announced three factory closures and computer retailer Escom shut 65 stores.

HOPES are rising that a rescue of the Costain Group — contractor for the controversial Newbury bypass — can be completed. The group was forced to suspend share-dealing after speculation that it was in trouble nearly halved its share price.

CITY investigators are attempting to pin down the full extent of the deception at do-it-yourself retailer Wickes, after the UK company announced that profits had been overstated.

BRITAIN'S employers have undermined a key part of Conservative propaganda by insisting that a national minimum wage would have little or no overall effect on jobs.

UK COMPANIES queued at the Indonesia Airshow 96 to supply aerospace products to the country's armed forces despite human rights groups' fears that new technology will be used to suppress internal unrest.

DASSAULT Aviation, maker of the Mirage fighter-bomber, has agreed to merge with France's state-owned Aerospatiale to create Europe's second-biggest aircraft builder.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates July 1	Sterling rates June 24
Australia	1.9746-1.9758	1.9453-1.9492
Austria	16.67-16.68	16.59-16.60
Belgium	48.78-48.80	48.50-48.54
Canada	2.1191-2.1208	2.0992-2.1007
Denmark	9.12-9.13	9.07-9.08
France	8.01-8.02	7.98-7.99
Germany	2.3690-2.3712	2.3574-2.3590
Hong Kong	12.03-12.04	11.91-11.92
Ireland	0.9721-0.9735	0.9721-0.9732
Italy	2,388-2,390	2,371-2,373
Japan	170.39-170.54	167.92-168.09
Netherlands	2.6569-2.6597	2.6420-2.6444
New Zealand	2.2697-2.2723	2.2728-2.2752
Norway	10.10-10.12	10.07-10.08
Portugal	243.63-243.90	242.03-242.25
Spain	199.34-199.49	198.22-198.44
Sweden	10.32-10.34	10.23-10.25
Switzerland	1.9419-1.9443	1.9445-1.9465
USA	1.5564-1.5581	1.5398-1.5401
ECU	1.2496-1.2509	1.2441-1.2452

FTSE100 Share Index up 14.6 at 3726.6. FTSE 250 Index down 62.9 at 4370.4. Gold down $3.00 at $381.50.

Tories plot to offload welfare state

Nessa MacErlean

HEADS of 10 of Britain's largest insurance companies have secretly discussed ways for their industry to take over responsibilities from the welfare state.

The group, chaired by Peter Davis of the Prudential, has been holding meetings at the Government's request over the past three months.

They discussed education, health care, legal costs, unemployment cover, pensions and long-term care. The "welfare reform group" will meet again on July 17, and plans to submit its conclusions to the Department of Trade and Industry in early August. The meetings have been kept under wraps until now and will cause controversy.

The DTI's commissioning of the report shows how seriously it is considering alternatives to shrinking state welfare.

Consumer bodies are likely to be deeply uneasy. The debate will be sharpened by repeated disclosures over the past five years of cases of insurers selling personal pensions and endowment policies to millions of people for whom they were inappropriate.

The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux says the companies did badly last October when they replaced the reduction in state assistance to homeowners unable to pay their mortgages.

"We have masses of evidence that it has caused immense problems to people who thought they were covered but found they weren't," says a spokeswoman. "We are not saying that insurers can't play a role, but they can't provide a complete subsititute."

The insurance chiefs will suggest that private pensions could be used to fund a broader range of welfare needs. This may be acceptable to the Government, which is already examining the idea of funding long-term care like that.

The group will also want broad investment and insurance vehicles to be used by people for welfare needs, from education to pensions. Instead of buying individual policies to insure against one outcome, consumers would protect themselves more easily against a wide range of eventualities.

The insurers will undoubtedly argue that more incentives need to be given to encourage people to save and insure. But they may suggest that tax relief alone is not enough. It is no help to people who do not earn enough to pay tax.

The group is confident that the companies can fill some of the gaps left by the state. Duncan Hopper, managing director of Legal & General Healthcare, says: "Could we, for example, provide for education fees? The answer is yes. We are doing some of it now. If there is a market, we will go after it."

The insurance sector is likely to come up with ideas for most parts of the welfare state, but is not thought to find unemployment cover attractive.

The insurers' initiative chimes in with comments from other sources. For example, this week the Adam Smith Institute will unveil a "model for a changed welfare system" — a "personal, funded, lifetime account into which people save when they are young, fit and in work, in order to provide for themselves when old, sick or unemployed". — *The Observer*

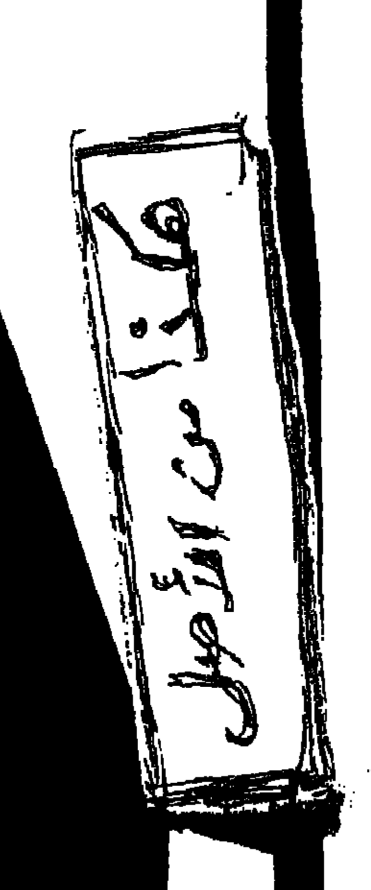
Nuclear sale figure falls

THE UK government last week admitted it was prepared to sell Britain's eight most modern nuclear reactors for as little as £1.26 billion, or just over a third of what it cost to build the newest atomic power station, Sizewell B in Suffolk, *writes Simon Beavis.*

In an unprecedented move, ministers left potential investors in this month's privatisation of British Energy guessing how much they would have to pay for their shares when they said the company could fetch up to £1.96 billion.

Although the first instalment on the shares has been fixed at 100p a share for small investors, they will in effect be "buying blind" and could pay anywhere between 180p and 280p a share in the second and final tranche.

The move came as it emerged that the prospectus has been amended following a new investigation by nuclear inspectors into problems with the uranium fuel components common to six of the eight atomic power stations.



GUARDIAN WEEKLY
July 7 1996

The Washington Post

Blast Survivors Lucky to Be Alive

Rick Atkinson in Landstuhl, Germany

FOR Tech. Sgt. Michael Jay, it was the simple act of rummaging for his sneakers in a sturdy metal locker. For Chief Master Sgt. Francis Klosiewski, it was the unusual craving for a late-night cup of coffee. And for Master Sgt. Glenn Braden, it was the momentary pause in the kitchen for a drink of water.

In each case, the most inconsequential gestures at 10 p.m. on Tuesday last week — turning left rather than right, bending over rather than standing up — turned out to have life-and-death significance. For each man, indeed for hundreds of Americans living in the U.S. military complex at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, the distinction between the quick and the dead was decided with terrifying capriciousness by where they were and what they were doing at the moment an enormous bomb ripped through the compound.

Jay, Klosiewski and Braden were among 43 injured U.S. Air Force personnel evacuated to the U.S. military medical center in western Germany, where they are being treated for an assortment of gashes, internal injuries and blast effects. In describing the events of last week, they seemed alternately grateful to be alive and baffled to have been spared in a cataclysm that killed 19 of their comrades.

Jay's escape may have been the most miraculous since, he said, he was apparently the only survivor among five airmen on the third-floor of Building 131, the eight-story dormitory that took the brunt of the blast when a tanker truck blew up 100 feet away. The 35-year-old flight engineer for a search-and-rescue HC-130 aircraft had finished work at 9:20 p.m. and slipped into shorts and a T-shirt for a late-night jog. He was looking for his shoes when the world disintegrated around him. "I didn't hear any explosion or see any flash. The first thing I remember was hearing the smoke alarm," he recalled. "I thought maybe it was my alarm clock. But then I realized I wasn't in bed. I was on the floor, and the locker was on top of me. That probably saved my life because it shielded me."

The top of his left ear had been severed and he was badly bruised, but Jay was otherwise intact. He wriggled out from under the locker, blood gushing fom his ear. Peering through the gloom, he could see that the building's outside wall had been ripped away. The balcony was gone. A roommate on the couch in the living room of the five-bedroom suite had vanished. He was later found among the dead.

Inching his way through debris in his stocking feet, Jay gingerly walked down the stairwell and out the back door.

Staff Sgt. Ardre Stanton, a 31-year-old C-130 crewman also was in Building 131, a twist of fate attributable to an engine malfunction that forced his aircraft to return to Saudi Arabia instead of flying to Kuwait City as planned After getting back to the Khobar Towers compound at 7 p.m., Stanton worked out at the gymnasium and then repaired to a fifth-floor common room where he was watching a video. Suddenly, a security guard, one of three on the roof who had spotted the suspicious truck parked next to the compound wall, raced down the corridor yelling, "Clear the building! Clear the building!"

Stanton bolted into the bedroom to grab his military identification card, vacating the more exposed common room just as the bomb exploded. Flung against a wall, his face and upper torso badly lacerated, he gathered his senses, slipped on a pair of boots and picked his way down the stairwell.

Klosiewski, 45, was working late on the fifth floor of nearby Building 127. His unit, the 58th Fighter Squadron, had nearly finished its 75-day rotation in Saudi Arabia, patrolling the "no-fly zone" in southern Iraq with F-15C fighters, and Klosiewski was filling out paperwork. He needed a caffeine jolt and walked into the kitchen across the hall for a cup.

"I heard a roar like a train coming down the tracks, except a lot louder. All of a sudden the wall came in on me," he recalled. "Everything went in slow motion. I saw the window coming out, the frame and everything coming right at me. I tried to turn, but it hit me."

Glass slashed through his right arm to the bone, ripping up tendons and muscle. Fragments peppered his face and upper body. Still, he was lucky. Twelve men in the squadron were killed, he said, and 20 others seriously injured.

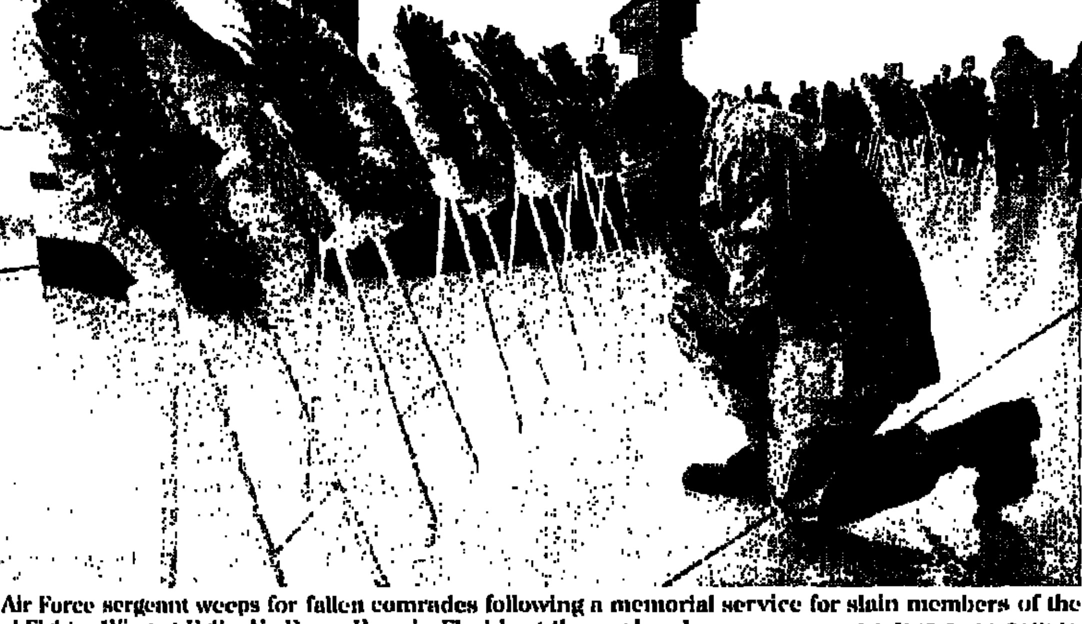
Braden, 41, was also in a kitchen, in Building 130. A maintenance technician for the 79th Fighter Squadron, he had just finished jogging and had stopped for a drink of water after showering. As he tossed the paper cup away, he heard a loud boom and sensed a bright flash behind him. "Then tornado-force winds knocked me across the kitchen. I was clinging to the refrigerator. The lights went out. I could feel that my leg was hurt," he said. "When I got into my room and got a flashlight, I saw that the back of my leg was split open, the whole length of it. I tied a towel around it as a tourniquet and yelled for help."

Each of the men interviewed praised the efforts of emergency response teams and the quick action of medical personnel, both American and Saudi.

Col. Kevin C. Kiley, commander of the U.S. military's medical center here, said all 43 patients — two of whom are women — are considered stable, including four who remain in the intensive care ward. Another nine injured Americans considered too badly hurt to move are still in Dhahran hospitals but will likely be flown to Germany in the coming days.

None of the men interviewed criticized security measures at the Khobar compound although none seemed overly eager to return to Saudi Arabia.

For now, the men seemed preoccupied with sifting through the trauma. "Somewhere along the line," Klosiewski said, "you have to put it behind you."



An Air Force sergeant weeps for fallen comrades following a memorial service for slain members of the 33rd Fighter Wing at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida at the weekend
PHOTOGRAPH: DAVE MARTIN

Life Returns to Normal at Saudi Base

John Lancaster in Dhahran

ON THE surface, life is slowly returning to normal at Khobar Towers, the military housing complex where 19 Americans died in a terrorist truck-bomb explosion last week. U.S. troops in T-shirts and gym shorts wolfed down hamburgers and pasta salad at an outdoor barbecue on Friday last week, the Muslim day of rest, while others sprawled in front of a big-screen television in the Konnection, a cavernous underground pool hall and nightclub.

In another sign of recovery, base authorities have rescinded the "no-salute" rule, which briefly dispensed with normal military formalities in the chaotic aftermath of the blast. More importantly, U.S., French and British aircraft enforcing the U.N.-sponsored flight ban over southern Iraq have resumed their normal operating tempo of 100 missions per day.

But for many, perhaps most, of the 2,250 American service personnel who make their homes at Khobar Towers, life is anything but normal. It never was. Notwithstanding close military ties between the U.S. and Saudi governments, U.S. service personnel in Saudi Arabia are strangers in a strange land, and the bombing has only deepened their sense of isolation.

U.S. military commanders go to great lengths to avoid offending local religious sensitivities. Alcohol is banned. Troops venturing into town must observe a strict dress code. Women are not allowed off base without male escorts.

Security fears add another blanket of restrictions to soldiers' lives. Following the bombing last November of a U.S. Army training mission in Riyadh that killed five Americans, commanders barred their troops from sitting down in restaurants, where they might make easy targets for terrorists. Now they are not even permitted to go off base.

Not that many are complaining. Even before the bombing, Americans rarely ventured into town, devoting their limited free time to lifting weights or learning to dance.

"We're here for a particular task," Lt. Col. Dennis Aleson, a Protestant chaplain on the base, told reporters. "People work 12-hour days six days a week. There isn't too much time to enjoy the culture."

The large U.S. military presence in Dhahran dates from 1990, when about 540,000 American troops assembled in Saudi Arabia as part of the U.S.-led coalition to drive Iraqi forces from Kuwait. At the time, the presence of the Western "infidels" caused enormous controversy in Saudi Arabia, a country so strict that women are not allowed to drive. But in a reflection of Saudi Arabia's strategic importance to the United States — and of Saudi Arabia's continued dependence on U.S. protection from hostile neighbors such as Iraq and Iran — the Americans have stayed.

About 5,000 U.S. troops serve in Saudi Arabia. The largest contingent, comprising 2,250 personnel, is in Dhahran. About 2,000 of them are involved in Operation Southern Watch, which enforces the ban on Iraqi flights over southern Iraq. The rest are mostly Army personnel associated with a Patriot missile battery, military spokesmen said.

Yeltsin Campaign Bribes Reporters

Lee Hockstader in Moscow

BORIS YELTSIN'S presidential campaign and its financial backers are spending large sums of cash — hundreds of thousands of dollars by some estimates — to bribe and influence Russian journalists and drive home an anti-Communist message, according to a variety of sources here.

Other campaigns in the Russian presidential race, including the Communists', also have spent heavily to arrange for favorable articles in newspapers and appearances on popular television and radio talk shows. But none has recruited journalists so methodically, nor paid them off so handsomely, as the Yeltsin campaign and its friends, said the sources, who include journalists, media executives, politicians and consultants to the Yeltsin campaign.

Working in conjunction with an array of private firms, including public relations agencies, the campaign and its backers have arranged for payoffs to journalists ranging from thousands of dollars a month for the most recognized reporters from major Moscow newspapers to $100 for a freelance piece by a novice ghostwriting for a provincial newspaper.

The price range for appearances on some television programs is considerably higher, and radio also does not come cheaply. But it is generally only lesser candidates who have had to pay for broadcast time because Yeltsin already exercises substantial control over Russia's main TV stations and has monopolized air time.

"This is a widespread practice," said Andrei Richter, director of the Center for Media Law and Ethics.

In an interview, a young Moscow journalist said he was paid several thousand dollars during the campaign to write articles stressing the danger of a Communist comeback in Russia. Many of the stories were planted in regional newspapers under a fictitious byline, he said.

He finally refused to take any more payoffs when he was asked to write what he considered to be disinformation about a rival to Yeltsin, liberal economist Grigory Yavlinsky. "Of course, reporters aren't stupid. We understand this is corruption," he said, speaking on condition that he not be identified. "But when it's small-scale, we don't really see it as corruption. It's considered a normal means of survival . . . Besides, in comparison with what [we] know about corruption in government, this doesn't seem like much."

A top strategist with the Yeltsin campaign confirmed that the campaign and its allies have poured money into planting what is known here as "hidden advertising" in Russian newspapers. "It is done in every campaign by every politician in every country," said Vyacheslav Nikonov, the Yeltsin campaign official. "In this country it was done by the headquarters of every campaign, and naturally it was also done by our headquarters."



CIA Knew Guatemala Agents Were Killers

R. Jeffrey Smith

A PRESIDENTIAL advisory panel disclosed last week that the CIA employed multiple informants in the Guatemalan government and military forces over the past decade who agency officials knew were involved in assassinations, torture, kidnappings and murders in that country.

The Intelligence Oversight Board also concluded that CIA officials wrongfully kept information about these crimes and other human rights abuses committed by their paid Guatemalan informants from Congress, committing a violation of U.S. law that continued until late 1994.

The board did not identify the informants, whom the CIA paid while providing extensive assistance to Guatemalan military operations against peasant guerrillas from 1984 to the early 1990s.

The board declined to accuse any individuals at the CIA of deliberate deception or criminal wrongdoing. It blamed instead a systematic failure by the agency to pay heed to the issue of human rights in its foreign operations until 1994. At that time, abuses by a paid CIA informant in another Central American country, El Salvador, provoked a broad CIA investigation and a damning internal report on the behavior of many of its human "assets," or informants, in the region.

None of the questionable informants remains on the CIA's payroll, but only one was dropped because of involvement in human rights abuses, according to the board.

The board's report resulted from a 15-month investigation and grew out of public allegations by Rep. Robert G. Torricelli, D-New Jersey, last year that the CIA had on its payroll a Guatemalan military officer who was linked to the murders of an American innkeeper, Michael DeVine, and a Guatemalan guerrilla married to U.S. citizen Jennifer Harbury.

Asked to comment, Torricelli said the report should have expressed "a greater level of outrage at the fact that American taxpayer money was used by the CIA to pay Guatemalans who murdered, tortured, and then covered up their crimes."

Harbury said she welcomed the report's disclosures about scurrilous activity by CIA contacts and its failures to inform Congress, but disagreed with some of its findings regarding her husband's death and promised to say more at a later time.

The board, which had wide-ranging access to classified documents at the CIA, the Pentagon, the State Department and the National Security Agency, bluntly called the CIA's performance on human rights issues during the period in question "unacceptable," even though Guatemala has long been notorious for lawlessness and violence.

But the board's report, which was presented in classified form to President Clinton, also complemented a series of reforms instituted early this year by CIA director John M. Deutch to correct some of the agency's mistakes. It included a new directive generally barring the recruitment of unsavory informants except when senior CIA officials decide their assistance is warranted by national interests.

White House officials said last week that they approved of the report's conclusions, including its recommendation that Clinton take other steps to correct a series of lesser errors in Guatemala. The board called, for example, for a new agreement between the State Department and the CIA to ensure that U.S. ambassadors are kept abreast of important CIA activities overseas.

Drawing on what it described as an almost inexplicable failure to provide accurate or timely information to Harbury and other U.S. citizens related to crime victims in Guatemala, the board also called for better government record-keeping and a more helpful government attitude in such cases.

While the board acknowledged in its report that the business of spying necessarily brings the CIA into contact with criminal figures and people with records of sordid behavior, the board listed several examples of informants in Guatemala whose activities were so egregious that they should have been shunned.

One unnamed informant "was the subject of allegations that in multiple instances he ordered and planned assassinations of political opponents and extrajudicial killings of criminals," the report said. Another was alleged to have "planned or to have had prior knowledge of multiple separate assassinations or assassination attempts." A third was accused of involvement in killings and kidnappings, while "a few" others were accused of "acts of intimidation."

Anthony Harrington, a Washington lawyer who directed the board's probe, declined to say exactly how many CIA informants were in such activities or to provide any other details, in part because of what he described as a reluctance by the CIA to reveal the extent of its "penetration" of the Guatemalan government and military forces.

He attributed the CIA's failure to take a hard look at these informants partly to the extraordinary "aura of secrecy" that surrounds all foreign activities of the CIA's Directorate of Operations, or clandestine service. He attributed it also to the relentless emphasis of CIA managers during this period on recruiting as many "assets" as possible, regardless of quality or behavior.

In addition to finding that the CIA's station in Guatemala failed to investigate reports about scurrilous activities by some of its informants, the board confirmed a long-standing suspicion in Washington that the agency's employees in Guatemala became too close to their contacts in the Guatemalan government and wound up overlooking the activities of some of those contacts.

In one significant instance documented by the CIA inspector general in 1994 but publicly described in detail for the first time by the board, the station chief "delayed, diluted, and suppressed some reports because he feared they would hurt the reputation of the Guatemalan military services and his ability to work with them."

The board also blamed the superiors of these officers at Washington headquarters for tending to withhold embarrassing details about their Guatemalan contacts from their colleagues, instead passing along mostly favorable information.

Prisoners Plan Lottery Of Death

Douglas Farah in San Salvador

SALVADORAN prisoners, angered by severe overcrowding that forces them to sleep in shifts and often go without food, are threatening to kill fellow inmates by lottery beginning July 15 to force the government to deal with the crisis.

Prison conditions here, always grim, deteriorated in recent months as police multiplied arrests during a crime wave. According to Victor Marina de Aviles, the government's human rights ombudsman, the situation now is "inhuman and such a threat for potential violence that it is indispensable to resolve the crisis immediately, in a responsible, humane manner."

Aviles, who issued a report last month, found the largest prisons are holding three times their intended capacity. Across the country, 8,225 inmates are jammed into prisons with a theoretical capacity of 3,800.

"From the reports we have received regarding horrendous overcrowding, rampant violence, insufficient food and primitive sanitary conditions in Salvadoran prisons, Human Rights Watch believes that such conditions violate the prohibition on 'cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment' contained in the Universal Bill of Rights," said Joanne Mariner, at the New York-based human rights group.

Inefficiency of the judicial system greatly compounds the problem. According to Aviles, 70 percent of the 8,225 inmates have never been convicted; they are waiting to be charged and tried. Some prisoners have been incarcerated longer than the maximum sentence for the crimes they are charged with.

"The figures are unacceptable," said Justice Minister Ruben Mejia in an interview. "Prisoners are in very bad conditions, but their biggest concern is their judicial status. Their biggest complaint is that they do not know what their sentence is or when they will be sentenced."



Medical staff help a dehydrated hunger striker from Santa Ana jail near San Salvador. He was protesting against poor prison conditions

The prisons have not been upgraded or repaired for decades because of the 14-year civil war, which ended in 1992.

And a seemingly endless stream of robberies, kidnappings and murders prodded the police to crack down, especially on young men who belong to violent street gangs.

The uncertainty and overcrowding led inmates at the Santa Ana prison, 60 miles north of San Salvador, to announce last month that they would kill four prisoners, beginning July 15, if the crisis is not resolved. The jail was built for a maximum of 350 prisoners and holds 787; many don't get meals and sleep in shifts on hard bunks or cement floors.

Abraham Paniagua, an inmate leader, told a news conference recently at the Santa Ana prison that inmates would hold a "lottery of death" — with 787 pieces of paper in a container, four with the word "death" written on them. Those who draw the death slips would die. The lottery apparently follows similar protests in Brazil, where several prisoners were killed.

"We had agreed to slit their throats, but it could be they would voluntarily choose to hang themselves first," Paniagua said. Prison officials concerned with overcrowding made him available to air inmates' grievances.

Family members scurried to the prison to keep vigil, wives and girlfriends praying as rumors of violence inside the prison spread.

"We don't want our children to die; what will we do?" said Hermelinda Zaldivar. "We don't want any bloodshed. But my son has been in there for two years, and neither his lawyer nor the judge gives me any hope of when he will be tried."

Last month, prisoners announced they would kill any new inmate delivered to Mariona. The government stopped shipping prisoners there, exacerbating the problems in other prisons.

Military College Bows to Court Order on Women

Rene Sanchez

THE CITADEL, one of the United States' last all-male, publicly funded military colleges, announced last week that it will begin accepting women into its ranks for the first time this fall, abruptly ending a tradition it had fiercely protected for 153 years.

That decision, made unanimously by the college's governing board, came in response to a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision last week. The court, in a 7 to 1 ruling, said that the male-only policy at the state-supported Virginia Military Institute was unconstitutional.

In a statement, Jimmy Jones, the president of the Citadel's board, said that the college, which is in Charleston, South Carolina, will "enthusiastically" begin accepting women into its corps of cadets. VMI, the nation's only other all-male, public military college, has yet to decide if it will accept women in light of the Supreme Court's decision, or try to become an entirely private institution instead. VMI officials did not comment on the Citadel's decision.

"The court has spoken and we've said, 'Yes sir'," said Lt. Col. Terrence Leedom, a spokesman for the Citadel. "We're going to do everything we can to make this work."

The Citadel's new policy ends an epic legal battle over admitting women that has dragged on for years and drawn national attention. Attorneys for the college have vigorously opposed every challenge to its all-male policy, and both the Citadel and VMI have supported new military training programs at all-female colleges near them.

But last fall, over the objections of the Citadel, a federal judge ordered one young woman who had filed suit against the college, Shannon Faulkner, to be admitted. But Faulkner dropped out during the college's grueling "Hell Week" orientation for freshmen. Since then, two other women have taken legal action to be admitted to the Citadel.

Robert Black, a lawyer for Faulkner and the two other women, said last week that the Citadel had no choice but to change its policy after the Supreme Court decision because it depends so much on public money. "There's no way they can do without it," Black said.

Leedom said about one-fourth of the Citadel's budget is public money. He said the college had considered becoming a private institution, but decided against it because it would still need public funds for important cadet training classes, and thus would still be vulnerable to legal challenges to admit women.

"Going private would not have solved our problem," Leedom said. "It's virtually impossible for us not to have some kind of federal or state support."

Black and women's rights groups praised the Citadel's decision, but cautioned that the real test of the college's commitment to admitting women will be determined by how aggressively it recruits them and offers financial aid for tuition. About half of the college's male cadets are recruited from out-of-state.

"It's a very good sign that they are not dragging their feet after the Supreme Court ruling," Black said. "But there's still going to have to be a lot of follow-through if they really intend to accept women. We don't know yet if they are truly behind this."

Only four of the Citadel's 1,300 applicants for the next school term are women. Leedom said the college had no idea how many more to expect now but will be prepared to change its campus housing and offer them the same financial aid as male applicants.

Diplomats To 'Kiss And Tell' More

Lee Hockstader in Moscow

"NO SEX, please, we're diplomats." That was the policy at the U.S. Embassy here during the grim years of the Cold War. Liaisons with Russians, dangerous or otherwise, were definitely out.

That changed a year ago. Romancing Russians was suddenly approved, as long as U.S. diplomats reported a relationship — known delicately as a "contact" — to the embassy. Call it a kiss-and-tell policy. But now the embassy wants to know more, and sooner.

In a policy directive issued to U.S. personnel at the embassy last month, the government spells out tightened rules on reporting one's love life. While in the past the policy applied only to a "continuing relationship or cohabitation," it now encompasses "any romantic and sexually intimate relationship."

In other words, diplomats were required to report only when things got serious. Now a hot date might have to be followed by a cool memo the morning after.

Actually, the rules say relationships should be reported to the embassy security office "as soon as possible" after they start — no need for a memo pad on the night stand. Several embassy officials contacted last week said the new guidelines are still fuzzy enough to leave room for interpretation.

Take, for instance, a hypothetical rendezvous between an American diplomat named Jane and her Russian friend, Boris. Jane and Boris have a torrid Saturday night followed by a rollicking Sunday afternoon. When Jane shows up for work Monday, would she have to file a report on her wild weekend with Boris?

"I don't know," said one exasperated diplomat. "I guess it depends on whether the date stayed for breakfast on Monday morning."

The shift in policy was inspired by a worldwide memo dated June 4 from the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security setting guidelines for diplomats in countries that "pose an exceptional intelligence threat to the U.S."

Three days later, the embassy here circulated a notice to its 500 or so American employees with the following Cold War-style warning: "Employees are reminded that the intelligence threat Russia poses to the United States is still formidable and the purpose behind such reporting is to ensure employees do not become subject to exploitation by a foreign intelligence service."

U.S. diplomats said the new rules were not triggered by any specific breach of security. Rather, they are concerned about a generally more aggressive attitude by Russian intelligence agencies.

A spokeswoman for the Bureau of Diplomatic Security insisted the policy change was not ordered by Washington. In fact, she said, "There's no new policy, there's just a reminder that this is the policy . . . romantic and sexually intimate relationships should be reported as soon as the employee determines it's a continuing relationship."

But what is a continuing relationship? "For some people that could be the next day and for guys it could be two or three weeks," she said. "That determination could be different for different people, don't you think?"

Arms Sales Restraint Urged

R. Jeffrey Smith

AN ADVISORY panel appointed by President Clinton has warned that the $22 billion global trade in increasingly sophisticated conventional arms threatens to undermine the security of the United States and its friends and has called on Washington and its allies to exercise more restraint in selling such weaponry to other countries.

Noting that the end of the Cold War has reshaped the world market for armaments and given the United States the predominant share of all such exports, the panel said that Washington should show more leadership to slow the proliferation of advanced weaponry and ensure that civilian technologies are not being diverted to military use overseas.

Although the panel noted that some arms sales to friendly regimes can add to U.S. security, it warned that modern arms "have in some cases attained degrees of military effectiveness . . . [previously] associated only with nuclear weapons" and expressed particular concern about the risks from selling to unstable regimes in Asia and the Persian Gulf.

In particular, the panel called for U.S. policymakers to stop approving some weapons exports to prop up declining U.S. defense firms, a recommendation at direct odds with a U.S. conventional arms control policy adopted by Clinton in February 1995. National security interests should be the sole criteria for making such exports, and domestic economic pressures should "not be allowed to subvert" decision-making, the panel said.

"The world struggles today with the implications of [exporting] advanced conventional weapons," including the promotion of regional arms races or political instabilities, and risks to U.S. soldiers overseas, the panel said. It warned of even greater greater problems in the future, as "yet another generation of weapons" with greater destructive power is exported.

As a result, the five-member, bipartisan panel said it was "strongly convinced that control of conventional arms and technology transfers must become a significantly more important and integral element of United States foreign and defense policy."

The U.S. share of the global arms market is 52 percent, up from around 25 percent nine years ago, and will likely expand to about 60 percent by the end of the decade, according to the report. But the size of the market has shrunk by more than half during the same period, primarily at the expense of Russia, which no longer ships arms to client states. U.S. domestic arms procurement also declined by $60 billion between 1985 and 1993.

Prelude to Power

Kevin Phillips

PARTNERS IN POWER
The Clintons and Their America
By Roger Morris
Henry Holt. 526pp. $27.50

THIS IS A fascinating and important book, although it is mostly about the Clintons prior to January 1993. Author Roger Morris, a liberal, earned praise from reviewers for his books skewering Nixon Era Republicans — Nixon himself, Alexander Haig and Henry Kissinger. Now he has written a not-quite-indictment of Bill Clinton that is cumulatively more damning than the one-dimensional harshness churned out by the American Spectator and suchlike.

Even the title, Partners In Power, is a good capsule of its contents — a dual portraiture of both Clintons and the extraordinary chemistry of their joint rise. Regarding the President, the first 200 pages of family and early background — of his father, in particular — frame one of Morris's most insistent points: that the fate of the Clinton administration lies in his past

And he paints that past in a sad pathologicolor. The President's father and stepfather were salesmen, but they were both also notorious womanizers, and his mother tolerated it in them. As the child of alcoholics, "Clinton learned to lie automatically and without any sense of guilt." He grew up around household violence and physical and verbal abuse, and came of age in Hot Springs, a gambling town, where bags of money floated around and the civic culture ran on hypocrisy. Hillary Rodham, by contrast, grew up a reasonably staid Methodist in suburban Chicago, in school so "defiantly unadorned and blithely uninterested in boys" that the high school newspaper predicted she would become a nun and be known as Sister Frigidaire.

Despite occasional lapses into cliched outsiderism, Morris also succeeds in painting both Little Rock and Washington as moral swamps in which Clinton's opportunism, developed in the former, prepared him, after a few stumbles, to thrive in the latter.

The Little Rock episodes, distilled for their essence, show Clinton as a populist or liberal in rhetoric and a power-structure ally in reality.

IN 1979, with the Clintons now married and just moved into the governor's mansion, Hillary took over the couple's financial rainmaker role with a little help from executives of Arkansas's own Tyson Foods and the famous commodity trades.

"This was chapter one, his first gubernatorial term. The chapters involving Clinton's re-election in 1982 following defeat in 1980 and then his subsequent statehouse terms right up to 1992, are more of the same. They chronicle how the young governor's ties to Arkansas business and finance continued to flower: " 'McDollars,' Clinton would laughingly call the money that always seemed available through the owner of Madison Guaranty." Tales of how Clinton's womanizing went from bad to worse, with Hillary being outraged when the state troopers she had thought would restrain him wound up collaborating. And details on the closeness between Bill Clinton and soon-to-be-convicted drug dealer Dan Lasater. Morris cites teacher and social worker Sally Perdue (who claims to have had an affair with Clinton), convicted drug dealer Sharlene Wilson, and an unnamed state policeman, all alleging that Clinton attended cocaine parties and used cocaine.

There are some new twists on Whitewater, too, describing how elderly blue-collar people lost their savings, land or both in Whitewater. But Chapter 19, on "Little Rock and Mena," alleges Clinton connections to shadowy CIA-linked drug and smuggling operations run out of northwest Arkansas during the 1980s and then shifts to a different note. The book includes anonymous allegations about an affair between Vincent Foster, the White House aide who committed suicide in mid-1993, and Hillary Clinton.

The book's Washington chapters are different — readable but more argumentation than new investigative findings. Instead of weaving the Clintons' financial and personal behavior into a larger context of corruption, as in Arkansas, the author mostly talks about the corruption in more abstract vocational categories from lobbyists, whom he calls Washington's permanent government, to journalists, whom he generally dismisses as ineffective or complicitous.

In terms of detail, the book ends with the inauguration. But in his afterword Morris calls the Clintons the lesser evils in a contest with the Republicans, and identifies both sides as bereft and corrupt. "Neither their opponents nor their supporters recognize the reality of these partners in power — that the Clintons are not merely symptomatic but emblematic of the larger bipartisan system in its end-of-the-century dead end."

The author appends one unusual post-1993 indictment against Washington: his case that the Capital City, with its "culture of complicity," has sloughed off evidence that Clinton, himself verbally and physically abused as a child, does the same to women. Morris lambastes the mainstream Washington press for trying to make light of the Paula Jones sexual harrassment case, insists that Clinton used his official position to approach women. But many of Morris's assertions about the Clintons are offered as fact although the supporting evidence is not always shared with the reader, who must take them on faith.

Because the book's publication follows the Whitewater verdicts and their further legitimization of serious investigations into Clinton's past — subpoenas, depositions, televised congressional hearings and the like are already in the works — Roger Morris can expect Partners In Power to have some political influence.

How much all of this will matter is another question. Other books have sifted much of this material (although Morris's previous investigative political biographies elevate him), and Clinton now enjoys a strong lead over Dole in the national polls, despite the fact that jokes about his morals have become standard fare on late-night television. And we need only remember that the last two presidents to score more than 60 percent of the vote — Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon — did so in elections in which their scandals and ethics were an issue. Maybe that will be the story again in 1996.

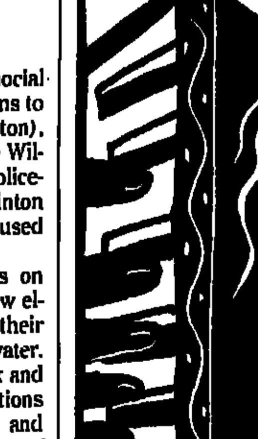


ILLUSTRATION: ANTHONY RUSSO

Notes From the New World

Michael Dirda

Accordion Crimes
By E. Annie Proulx
Scribner. 381pp. $25

E. ANNIE PROULX's first two novels — Postcards (1992) and The Shipping News (1993) — walked away with virtually all the most glittering literary prizes, including the PEN-Faulkner, the National Book Award, the Pulitzer and the Irish Times International Fiction Prize (big bucks). You would think Proulx would have the simple decency to make her third novel merely so-so, if only to let someone else grab a little limelight. No such luck. Born in 1935, Annie Proulx spent a lot of years learning her craft, selling articles to regional magazines, working on gardening books, producing short stories, as well as raising three sons. She now seems to know everything about writing. And a fair amount about life, too. After all, a young author may be accomplished, witty or technically innovative, but no kid can ever match a middle-aged novelist for insight into everyone's favorite tragicomedy, the ravages of time and fate.

In Accordion Crimes, a group of eight linked stories, Proulx takes us on a panoramic tour (*d'horizon* and *de force*) of America's ethnic past. To accomplish this she creates a green button accordion — that most insulted and injured of musical instruments — which comes to be owned by a score or so working-class people during the hundred years of its knockabout existence. For these various family mini-sagas, set in Louisiana, Maine, Chicago, the West and other regions, Proulx mimics perfectly the broken English, characteristic idioms, and keenly expressed prejudices of Italians, blacks, Poles, French Canadians, Germans, Cajuns and Hispanics. She vividly evokes, again and again, the exhausting lives and desperate pleasures of the poor: "He made her pregnant on their wedding night, and his life slipped into the ancient human groove of procreation, work, cooking, children's sicknesses and their little talents and possibilities. For the first time he saw he was no different than anyone else."

Many stories about immigrants in 20th-century America tend to be uplifting, but not Proulx's. If one may criticize Accordion Crimes ever so mildly, it is only for its relentless existential bleakness. Imagine the folksy tales of Lake Wobegon, retold by Dreiser or Richard Wright. An innocent Italian accordion-maker is shot to death by an angry racist mob. A young girl lifts up her arms and has them sheared off above the elbow by a flying piece of scrap metal. A wheelchair-bound man is miraculously cured, then commits suicide.

Yet grim as these events are, Proulx's sentences invest them with a sardonic lilt, like items from News of the Weird. "A month later word came from Texas that Messermacher had dropped dead at his mailbox, the new Sears catalog open on his breast at the pages showing a selection of women's hair nets." Another character actually finds "a job for a few months delivering white ashtray sand to luxury hotels and apartment buildings."

Accordion Crimes beautifully recreates the spicy, colorful, almost tall-tale side of American ethnic life. Tamonette joins a civil rights sit-in partly because her great-aunt "had gone to Paris in the 1920s as a white family's maid and there learned to fly an airplane, returned to the south as a crop duster until a white farmer shot her out of the sky in 1931; even then she went fiercely, aiming the diving fiery plane at the man in the field with the rifle, and got him, too."

There are, not surprisingly, mouthwatering, high-caloric descriptions of food and feasts. Consider the cuisine of Mrs. Josef Przbysz: "In her day she had cooked with passion and experience, a craftworker who needed no measuring cup or recipe, who held everything in her mind. She kept a garden in the handkerchief yard, tomatoes tied to old crutches she took from the Dumpster at the hospital, she made her own good sausage and sauerkraut." For her now-dead son she regularly prepared a "snack of *pierozki* and the filling soup *zurek* with mushrooms and potatoes and fermented oatmeal and good sour bread . . . and for Sunday dinner *golabki*, the little cabbage rolls in a sweet-sour sauce, and always a fresh-baked round *babka* or two." Later, she mentions *kolac* nut rolls — unbeatable, by the way, with coffee. Proulx clearly knows the Slavic world of my own childhood.

But then she knows your childhood or your parents' too, provided you come from an ethnic group that plays and loves the accordion in all its bellowing, bleating oom-pah-pah glory. Mexican folk songs. Zydeco. Beerhall music. Polkas. Proulx packs her pages with parties, dances, funerals, weddings, music contests, nightclub acts — and she makes you hear the raucous chords, feel the growing heat, see the manic sweating dancers. Still, my favorite of her many musical soirees begins quietly when a trucker hires an accordion-violin duo to play at a surprise birthday party:

"His wife was white with rage, had been truly and unpleasantly surprised, for her birthday had come and gone unnoticed two weeks before; now, gripped by savage menstrual cramps, both kids hacking with bronchial coughs, she had been slopping around in a torn housecoat, the place a mess of strewn socks, dirty dishes and dust kitties, when cars and trucks began to pull up and disgorge strangers who wished her happy birthday, lit cigarettes and started to drink." Matters rapidly go downhill.

PROULX sticks closely to her downtrodden and fated protagonists, gradually disclosing their pathetic hopes for a better life and their own recurrent prejudices: anti-German feeling during World War I, Polish hatred for the blacks swarming into the old neighborhoods, Hispanic loathing of Italians, the mutual disdain of cowboy and city slicker. In these pages America's melting pot sometimes boils with rage but more often merely simmers with unhappiness. While older immigrants dream, usually in vain, of making it, getting rich, becoming American, their children or grandchildren soon find themselves eager to reject all the old-country ways or oppressed by a sense of loss, yearning for a vanishing culture just beyond their grasp.

Though it may at times seem like North American magic realism, the book, with its admixture of representative types, gallows humor and overt symbolism, actually belongs to the underappreciated tradition of naturalism. Proulx knows life's extravagant bounty and wastefulness, loves a melodramatic flourish: and deftly keeps the reader waiting hundreds of pages to see who will discover the thousand dollar bills hidden inside the green accordion.

Blow to Algeria as France cuts back aid

Jean-Pierre Tuquol

AFTER a considerable amount of dithering, the French government has decided to cut back its aid to Algeria. The decision was due to be communicated to the Algerian authorities at an unspecified future date and then made public by the French foreign ministry, which has been handling all press statements on relations between the two countries since the murder of seven French Trappist monks in Algeria in May.

But leaked reports suggesting that French aid was going to be reduced to 3 billion francs ($600 million), or half its present amount, prompted the French foreign ministry to issue a statement on June 25 in which it confirmed that, as a result of budget cuts in 1996, France was planning an across-the-board reduction in aid to all recipient countries.

"In this respect," the ministry said, "Algeria will be no exception to the rule, nor will it be treated less favourably [than other countries]. Reports that our financial dealings with Algeria will be reduced by 50 per cent have no foundation."

Up to now, aid to Algeria has been fixed by a financial agreement signed in July 1994 by the then French finance minister, Edmond Alphondéry, and his Algerian opposite number, Ahmed Benbitour.

The 6 billion franc aid package chiefly helped the Algerian government to finance the purchase of French products, such as capital equipment, pharmaceuticals, vehicles and cereals, and to put the country's finances on an even keel. That aid has now been used up, and Franco-Algerian relations continue along traditional commercial lines.

Paris can produce several arguments to explain its cutback in aid: such financial agreements represent a burden on the French budget; it makes political sense to try to reduce them in order to enable France to meet the Maastricht criteria and join the European Monetary Union.

Further justification for France's decision can be found in the fact that the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the European Union (EU) are all queuing up to lend money to Algeria now that this once socialist country has come round to the merits of neo-liberalism.

But whatever justifications are made by Paris, the reduction of aid will come as bad news to its main beneficiaries, companies active in Franco-Algerian trade. French exporters are bound to compare Paris's stance unfavourably with the much more generous attitude adopted by Madrid, which concluded a financial agreement with Algeria for $900 million at the beginning of this year.

Above all, it is difficult to see how the French government can justify a cutback in aid to Algeria when it recently showed such exceptional generosity to the two other Maghreb countries, Tunisia and Morocco.

When President Jacques Chirac visited Tunis in October 1995, he announced that France's financial aid to Tunisia would virtually double from 594 million to 1 billion francs. At the beginning of 1996, Paris wiped 1 billion francs off Morocco's debt to France.

But the sharpest reaction to the latest news is bound to come from Algiers. While it is only to be expected that the Islamists will strive to make as much political capital as possible out of France's decision, the Algerian government will interpret it as the first hint that it is about to be "left in the lurch" politically by Paris, its most loyal ally since the beginning of the latent civil war in Algeria.

Up to now, France has been unsparing in its assistance to its former colony. It has, for example, pleaded Algeria's case within the IMF — with some degree of success. The fund, currently headed by a Frenchman, Michel Camdessus, takes every opportunity of singing the praises of the "adjustment policy" pursued by Algeria since 1994. No doubt another such opportunity will come up when the IMF reviews Algeria's macroeconomic results in Washington on June 26.

On closer inspection, however, it emerges that Algeria's economic performance has been only partly successful. On the upside, the dinar is on the way to becoming a convertible currency; restrictions on foreign trade have been eased; the privatisation programme is slowly getting under way; the budget has more or less been balanced; the balance of trade has moved back into the black, with a $1.2 billion surplus for the January-April period; and operation of the oil and gas industries, which represent Algeria's only serious export earnings, is now open to foreign companies.

The downside is that clouds are gathering on the horizon. The climate of violence has been discouraging inward investment, except in hydrocarbons.

Inflation is rearing its ugly head again, with a 13 per cent rate for the first five months of 1996, whereas price rises for the whole year were initially not expected to exceed 15 per cent; state-owned companies are going deeper into deficit (their losses have more than tripled over the past year, moving from $810 million to $2.54 billion); and unemployment continues to rise, now affecting 29 per cent of the working population as opposed to 25 per cent in 1994.

Both symbolic and symptomatic of this patchy economic performance has been growth: it rose to 3.5 per cent in 1995, and was 4 per cent more than that in the first quarter of 1996.

These flattering figures might suggest that the Algerian government deserves a medal for sound economic management. But they are in fact the result of an unexpectedly good performance by the farming industry: thanks to good weather, harvests were up by 20 per cent last year. Industrial output, on the other hand, fell yet again by more than 4 per cent during the first quarter of 1996.

(June 26 and 27)



In focus . . . Di Pietro is finding it hard to stay out of the limelight — PHOTOGRAPH: MARCO PESARESI

Ex-judge can't keep his 'clean hands' off

Marie-Claude Decamps in Rome

IN THE month since it came to power, Romano Prodi's centre-left government has been keeping a low profile. The same cannot be said of its most celebrated minister, Antonio Di Pietro, former investigating judge and orchestrator of the "Clean Hands" anti-corruption campaign.

It must, of course, be hard for him to fall back into line after enjoying four years as Italy's most popular public figure. Di Pietro has tackled his job in the public works ministry — a hotbed of sleaze under the "First Republic" — with all the mettle, but also the lack of subtlety, of a bull careering into an arena. His first charges could hardly be said to have had the salutary effect he intended.

First there was his public row with the cautious Prodi and the young mayor of Rome, Francesco Rutelli, over preparations for the jubilee in 2000, which will entail a colossal public works programme.

Di Pietro, rightly suspecting that the jubilee might provide ideal conditions for favouritism and corruption, asked to be allowed to examine the books. His request was in large part turned down.

Then came another incident. When he realised that the handful of *carabinieri* posted to his ministry served virtually no purpose whatsoever, Di Pietro suggested they open an office in the ministry entrance, where they could register complaints lodged by members of the public.

His suggestion immediately came in for widespread criticsm. It was suggested in some quarters that he was reintroducing the "denunciation boxes" that were used in the Venetian Republic.

The minister's latest and especially hamfisted initiative has provoked another chorus of protest. Continuing his anti-corruption campaign, Di Pietro, who now goes by the nickname of "transparency minister", suggested that an independent body should be set up to study and monitor "preventively" the earnings of all government employees. Anyone unable to justify his or her lifestyle would be requested "to resign without waiting for the law to intervene".

His suggestion prompted some trade unions to talk of Italy "slithering towards a police state". And the centre-right parliamentary opposition had a field day, claiming that "Big Brother was not far away".

The harshest criticism came from President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, who in a recent speech was scathingly critical of the "culture of suspicion". "It is justifiable to verify, but not to feed on suspicions," he said.

(June 25)

Murder gives Brazilian sleaze scandal a nasty edge

Dominique Dhombres in Rio de Janeiro

THE third-rate soap opera which for the past few years has been played out on the political stage in Alagoas, a backward state in north-eastern Brazil, has just taken a new and grisly turn.

Paulo Cesar Farias, Brazil's most distinguished master briber in recent years and treasurer of the 1989 election campaign of Fernando Collor de Mello (who was president from 1990 to 1992), was found dead in his bed on the morning of June 23. Also in the bed was his partner, Suzana Marcolino. They had both been shot through the heart.

Farias was pushing 50. His friend, who like him was a native of Alagoas, was only 28. The former treasurer's five bodyguards found the two bodies at his beach house, 8km from Maceio, the state capital.

Experts at the Forensic Institute in Maceio conducted a post-mortem, which led them to conclude that Farias had been murdered at about 4am on June 23. The bullet had been fired at point-blank range. Marcolino is believed to have died the same way a little later. The .38 revolver used by the killer belonged to the young woman. Alagoas state police are currently working on the assumption that it was a "crime of passion", followed by a suicide.

Marcolino was in deep financial trouble and, ironically, had begun to blackmail the king of blackmailers himself. He regularly paid her large sums of money. The couple had had a blazing row on June 22. A week earlier, Marcolino had publicly threatened to kill Farias. There is evidence she may have been pregnant, even though Farias, who lost his wife two years ago, had had a vasectomy.

Not everyone is convinced by the official explanation of events. The justice minister, Nelson Jobim, has ordered a federal inquiry, which will be carried out in conjunction with the Alagoas police's investigations.

Alagoas has remained a somewhat feudal state, where the Collor dynasty plays a leading role in politics and the media. Collor, living in exile in Miami, continues to control his home state. His family still owns the main local daily, A Gazeta de Alagoas. And he is in a position to exert pressure on the police investigations.

There is another possible version of events: that it was a case of double murder. According to that theory, the aim was to "burn the archives", as they say in Brazil. Farias kept locked away in his memory details of the countless murky cases in which he had been involved during his career, first as treasurer of Collor's election campaign, then as main supplier of illegal funds to Collor's wife and immediate circle once he had become president.

The so-called "PC Farias system", which relied on intimidation and extortion, raised tens, if not hundreds of millions of dollars until the president was forced to step down on charges of corruption in December 1992.

His former treasurer did a bunk in 1993. After being on the run for several months he was arrested in Thailand, extradited and tried in Brazil for minor offences He was given a four-year prison sentence for tax evasion, while facing further charges in 41 of the 600 corruption trials involving the former Collor administration.

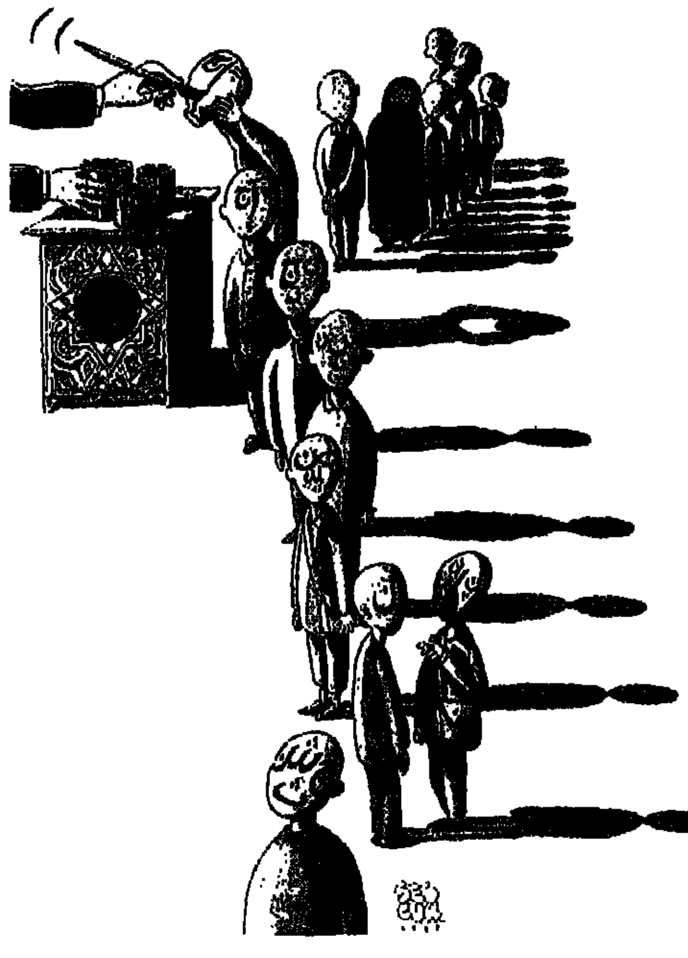
At the time of his death Farias had been released on parole and was living under the protection of his bodyguards. His murder has the makings of a first-class whodunit.

(June 26)



Maghreb nations on a steep learning curve

How Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia respond to the challenges facing them will depend on the health of their education systems, writes **Catherine Simon**



A GIRL carrying a huge bundle of firewood on her back staggers along the road that winds its way up to Ifrane. She passes the entrance to Al-Akhawayn University without glancing at its majestic cedar-lined drive and ultra-modern chalet-like buildings where 450 carefully selected students in residence follow an "American-style course" in English. It is a world from which she is barred: like 75 per cent of her fellow Moroccan girls, she has never been to school.

Al-Akhawayn University is not the only desert island of chic in Morocco's ocean of destitution. The country has a highly élitist education system: some 3.3 million children get a basic nine-year education (as in Algeria and Tunisia), but only 330,000 stay on after the age of 15 to study for a high-school diploma.

There is a widening gulf between the tiny minority of those lucky enough to get a proper education and those, most of them female, who do not — even the government admitted in 1994 that two out of three Moroccan women were illiterate.

The situation in the two other countries of the Maghreb, Algeria and Tunisia, is very different. As soon as it gained independence, Algeria conducted a massive education drive. The result has been "quantity, not quality — the aim was popular education, and it ended up being populous education", a university lecturer claims rather sourly.

Tunisia has on the whole avoided that mistake, making education available to the masses without allowing teaching standards to suffer too much. It has organised what it calls "centres of proficiency", such as the Preparatory Institute for Scientific and Technological Studies in Tunis, which is similar to Morocco's Mohammed V Lycée in Rabat.

The World Bank estimated in 1991 that 95 per cent of Tunisian children were in full-time primary education, an exceptionally high figure which Algeria never achieved, even in peacetime — it had 88 per cent in 1991. Morocco, however, trailed far behind with an estimated 55 per cent in 1990.

It is readily admitted in government circles in Rabat that priority must be given to ending this "disastrous state of affairs". Habib el-Malki, head of the National Youth Council, says: "Unless we extend primary education to the whole population and reduce illiteracy irreversibly, Morocco will never be able to become a modern country."

The World Bank, which has made education and health its two "social priorities", plans to grant Morocco a loan of about $60 million for education to help it cope with that mammoth task.

The contrasting situations in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia do not just demonstrate the differing amount of ground that each country still needs to make up, but reflect the priorities that have guided their education policies since independence.

The Maghreb countries have adopted a different approach to the three key issues of how to reconcile mass education with the training of élites, which language to use in schools, and how to handle religious constraints.

The Arab poet Ibn al-Mouqaffa claimed that "the intellectual is like the elephant, whose beauty can be perceived on only two occasions: when he lives in the wilderness and when he serves as a mount for kings". That quip, according to the Algerian sociologist Aïssa Kadri, who lectures at Paris-VIII University, sums up rather well the attitude of the Maghrebi regimes to their élites — or to those claiming to belong to them.

But, Kadri says, there are slight differences from country to country. Unlike Tunisia, where after two decades of considerable social mobility "the élites move within the narrow circle of the ruling classes", and unlike Morocco, "where they reproduce themselves within the feudal framework of the Makhzen [central power]", Algeria has kept its élites "out in the cold".

EXCEPT FOR the select group of engineers, experts and technical managers who are needed to run the administration and operate the gas and oil industries that earn foreign currency, the Algerian government, which grew out of the virulently anti-intellectual Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), has always cold-shouldered anyone with a degree, Kadri says.

As for the country's colonial overlords, they contrived "systematically to deny" the existence of "indigenous" élites: "The French administration was content to co-opt a small number of people it regarded as capable of serving its own interests. The present Algerian government is behaving in exactly the same way. It's as if it believed that all true decision-making should take place well away from university campuses and without any regard for expertise."

The shortcomings of Algerian education have been aggravated by the bloody upheavals of recent years. More than 1,000 schools and universities have reportedly been completely or partly destroyed by bomb attacks and acts of vandalism in the past three years.

Under pressure from the Islamists, some schools have banned "ungodly" subjects from their curriculum and abolished co-educational classes. Hundreds of teachers, most of them French-speaking, have been forced to flee abroad.

The problems of Algeria's education system, which have been exacerbated by the civil war, are also to be found in peaceful Morocco and Tunisia, though to a lesser degree.

It was only natural for the once colonised peoples of the Maghreb to wish to repossess their culture, history and identity. The Arabisation policies that were implemented in the sixties and seventies were seen as part of the national duty of their newly-fledged administrations.

This was particularly true of Algeria. To forget the indignity of having had to suffer 130 years of French colonisation, the Algerians strove to be more Arab than any other Arabs — to the detriment of their large Berber minority — and turned Islam into the religion of state and the foundation of their identity.

Tunisia and Morocco remained bilingual after independence. Because they had enjoyed the status of protectorates rather than colonies, their pride had suffered less and they adopted a more relaxed attitude to their relationship with France.

Their "return" to the Arabic language has been difficult. Arabic, the holy language of the Koran, has not been modernised like Hebrew, Japanese or Chinese, "which have been adapted and simplified", according to Béchir Ben Yahmed, the Tunisian boss of the French-language weekly, Jeune Afrique.

It could well be that Arabic is cramped by its connections with Islam and a religious dogma regarded in some quarters as backward-looking. "The Arabic language, every word of which leads to God, was designed to conceal reality, not to apprehend it," says the distinguished Arabist, Jacques Berque.

The Arabisation of primary and secondary education has been carried through in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. Many Algerians claim it has produced a generation of "bilingual illiterates", who are equally at sea when reading Arabic or French texts. The education system is in a shambles. With an 80-per-cent failure rate for high-school diplomas in 1995, and because of concessions made to the more conservative members of government, it has become a hotbed of Islamists.

The long-concealed divide between Arabic-speakers and French-speakers has turned into an overt clash between two irredeemably opposed camps. This factor has impinged on the terrible tragedy being played out in Algeria. The Tunisian government, by opting for modernisation, and the Moroccan regime, through its attachment to the past, have so far managed to prevent a similar problem arising.

In 1991 the Tunisian education minister, Mohamed Charfi, announced sweeping reforms. School textbooks were revised and teachers were given refresher courses. Civic and religious instruction became the responsibility of two teachers instead of one; the first explained the workings of the law and the country's institutions, while the second encouraged a modern interpretation of Islam, *ijtihad*.

HISTORY teaching also changed, casting its net wider to embrace Hannibal and St Augustine as well as Ibn Khaldoun and Habib Ben Ali Bourguiba. As the present Tunisian education minister, Hatem Ben Othmane, puts it: "High-quality teaching encouraging a critical approach and based on universal values is the best bulwark against fanaticism."

Both supporters and critics of the reforms say that classes remain overcrowded, schools are poorly equipped and the syllabus is top-heavy. "There's a book for each subject," says one teacher. "The kids can't take any more. We're producing a generation of hunchbacks." The government intends to iron out these problems. The number of textbooks, for example, will be reduced by 34 per cent next October.

But the minister has genuine grounds for optimism. The rate of school dropouts has gone down. High-school diploma pass rates are up. More efficient birth control has made it easier to cope with the influx of new pupils. And Tunisia is now much less dependent on France than are Morocco and Algeria.

The World Bank noted in 1995 that high-quality education was available at every level, but that the system was highly selective. That selection was based increasingly on "social criteria". As a result, private tuition has become increasingly widespread in Tunisia, just as it has in Morocco. It is a luxury that poorer families can rarely afford.

"The egalitarian ideal so often touted in Tunisia needs to be put into perspective," says Pierre Vermeuren, a French educationist. "In both Tunisia and Morocco educational selection is based on two main criteria: money and command of the French language."

The Maghreb countries face new challenges as they open up their economies to Europe. Their ability to meet them will depend largely on the health of their education systems.

(June 20)

World's last Yiddish paper folds

Nicolas Weill

UNZER WORT (Our Word), the world's last Yiddish-language daily newspaper — which in recent years appeared only three times a week — is to fold at the end of this month. The Paris-based publication had come to be known by its some 4,000 regular readers simply as "the Jewish paper".

Without any aid or subsidies, it catered for the fast-dwindling ranks of Jews who had come originally from Bessarabia, Galicia, Poland and other parts of eastern Europe where people used to speak Yiddish — a mixture of medieval German, Slavonic and Hebrew, which eventually became a language in its own right.

The Yiddish press thrived in Paris for many years after the second world war. And until quite recently there were three Yiddish dailies in France, which perpetuated in their own way the political divisions of the prewar east European Jewish community.

One of those dailies, the communist Naye Presse, ceased publication in 1993, as did Unzer Shtime, the paper run by the Bund, the Jewish Social Democratic Party.

Unzer Wort, which was set up by Marc Jarblum and Israël Jefroykin in 1947, managed to keep going for a little longer. But its readership was getting older, and the number of journalists capable of writing the kind of elegant Yiddish demanded by the paper's managing editor, Jacques Cypel, was dwindling.

Unzer Wort's longevity, which eventually became a source of fascination to the French and US media, was no doubt partly due to its Zionist line, a stance shared by most of the organised Jewish community. It supported the Israeli Labour Party and gave extensive coverage to news from Israel and developments in the community.

Isreal's Labour movement proved unable to keep alive its own Hebrew-language daily, Davar, which folded a few months ago. So it is hardly surprising it could not save Yiddish publications in France and in New York, where Yiddisher Kampfer, a Zionist Labour publication, has also just announced that it too is closing down.

There are, however, one or two indications that Yiddish is making a comeback. University professorships have been set up, enabling students to learn the language of their grandparents.

But for those whose mother tongue is Yiddish, the demise of Unzer Wort will only make them feel a little lonelier in a world where there is no one to step into their shoes.

(June 26)

Le Monde
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Joanna Moorehead meets Sister Wendy Beckett, TV art critic and Norfolk hermit

Habitual change

HOW MUCH ambition does it take to become an internationally-recognised celebrity, with a major TV series, a host of fans and the kind of status that guarantees you the best rooms and tables wherever you go? None at all, according to Sister Wendy Beckett, whose new 10-part TV series — Sister Wendy's Story Of Painting — began this week on BBC television.

Filming took her to New York, where she was mobbed in the street by autograph-hunters; Philadelphia, where the Museum of Art expressed an interest in selling Sister Wendy dolls; and Rome, where the Pope told her he was one of her fans. But give Sister Wendy the choice, she insists, and she'd be off the set before you could say Leonardo da Vinci, back to her day job as a silent and solitary hermit.

As millions tuned in to her BBC1 debut, 67-year-old Sister Wendy was back to her solitary life, in her caravan parked in the garden of a Carmelite convent in Quidenham, Norfolk.

She wasn't watching the programme because she doesn't own a TV set, and she won't be receiving a flood of congratulatory telephone calls when the show goes off air because she never goes near the phone. Messages are relayed via Sister Anne-Marie ("An absolute sweetie") who brings her a list of callers once a day.

Despite her habit, Sister Wendy isn't exactly an orthodox nun and her life in Norfolk is more or less self-invented, though obviously inspired by a long tradition of Christian hermits. She became a nun at 16 but she wasn't a Carmelite. She entered the Notre Dame teaching order, was sent to Oxford (where she received a congratulatory first) and then returned to South Africa, where she had lived as a child, to teach in Orange Free State.

But teaching did not, in the long term, suit the then Sister Michael, and in 1970 she got permission from Rome to leave her order and become a "Consecrated Virgin". This odd-sounding status is often conferred on women who are associated with enclosed convents but are not actually members of the community.

Strictly speaking, there is no need for Sister Wendy to wear a habit. The Notre Dame nuns abandoned the practice long ago and other consecrated virgins wear ordinary clothes. Some of her fellow nuns find the fact that Sister Wendy appears on TV in hers slightly irksome.

"She looks like something from Nuns On The Run," says one. "It obviously gives the impression that she's what nuns look like, but of course she isn't. We're all in civvies these days."

Her preference for the habit has almost certainly helped plant her in the public imagination and has been a godsend for the TV crew — "It's great for continuity," says David Willcock, her producer. And it's that slightly titillating combination of watching a nun hold forth on matters sexual that, some would say, accounts for much of Sister Wendy's TV success.



Sister Wendy: her 'real life' is silent PHOTOGRAPH: JANE BOWN

Her mention of fluffy pubic hair when describing a Stanley Spencer in a previous series is legendary, and in her Story Of Painting she talks about Leonardo's "preference for boys". But she says it isn't difficult to talk about sex: sexual organs are "just part of the apparatus God made for us" and nothing to get embarrassed about. The real intimacy, she believes, is the relationship between us and God.

Art was always a great love — she would read about it voraciously in her caravan — and after doing publishing work for many years to help bring in cash for the Carmelites she turned to writing on contemporary art for periodicals.

The gulf between her two personas, hermit and celebrity, could hardly be wider, as she admits. When she's in London for the BBC she stays at a Kensington hotel, enjoys lunches at top restaurants with journalists and takes taxis around town. In Quidenham she spends her time in or near her caravan, eats alone and walks only as far as the convent chapel for Mass. Yet that, she insists, is the "real world" — the "unreal world" is the BBC and the bustling metropolis.

SO HOW can she bear to tear herself away from a life she believes is pure and true and subject herself to forays into an altogether more murky, trivial and superficial world?

"Leaving the convent is a wrench but, although being away is very different, underneath life is the same. It's just another way of being and of loving God." She hopes she brings something of the silence and stillness of her hermit existence into the busy, ever-changing, corridors of the BBC, and Willcock thinks she does. The only thing she has insisted on in her contract, he says, is that she must attend Mass every day, wherever she is in the world.

Not everyone in the art world is as enthusiastic about what comes out of the cutting-room, however. "It's the candyfloss end of the presentation of the visual arts on TV," says one senior art historian.

Wendy meanwhile bubbles with excitement about the new series. "I've always wanted to be on BBC1 because these are the people I want to reach — the ordinary people who are a bit afraid of art, who think you need a degree to talk about art or understand it.

"My vocation isn't to talk about spiritual things, it's to talk to people who don't know God and don't know art. Because wherever beauty and truth are, God is there, too."

Charter for the part-timer

A blow has been struck for all women in Britain who want to work and care for children, reports **Markie Robson-Scott**

IT WAS an eye-catching headline in Essentials, an IPC magazine: "People think their company won't let them go part-time, but if you don't ask, you'll never know." Sarah Rolls, an advertorials manager with IPC, asked after she'd had her second baby and soon found out. When the company refused to consider her request to job-share, they did so "at their peril", says Alan Lakin, chief legal adviser to the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Rolls, aged 35, had been with the company for six years. "IPC said it was a unique job," she says, "that clients would find it unworkable, that it would be hard to change the paperwork — all sorts of lame excuses. In my job, you're out of the office a lot anyway and clients find it hard to get hold of you, so you're used to leaving good notes and having a good operating system."

She had hoped to job-share on Essentials and Woman and Home magazine, with a freelance colleague, herself now redundant; the two had worked closely for years on four magazines. "We planned to continue to manage our own projects: if I set something up, I'd deal with that client, though my job-sharer would have been able to take over as well. The company would have gained because one of us would have been there all year round — we'd have worked out holiday cover."

On the eve of an industrial tribunal, IPC settled out of court and awarded Sarah Rolls £35,000, representing two years' salary plus £5,000 for injury to feelings. "This case won't open the floodgates," Lakin says, "because most people still need to work full-time, but each case that succeeds is important because it gives credence to the issue of job-sharing and boosts confidence in women in similar positions who are wondering what to do."

Sarah Rolls is not the first to succeed; among recent cases, Susan Givern, a clerical worker at ScottishPower in Glasgow, was awarded the same amount when a tribunal ruled that there was no reason why her work couldn't be carried out as a job-share; a clerk/typist took Leeds City Council to tribunal for sex discrimination, and won, after it had refused to let her job-share in spite of its policy of allowing employees to return to work part-time after maternity leave; and Violet Mulligan, an occupational therapist who had to resign after her request to job-share was refused, also won her case against the Eastern Health and Social Services Board in Northern Ireland.

So is the British workplace about to be transformed into a caring, sharing paradise? "There is no legal entitlement for someone in Sarah Rolls's position to be given part-time work," Lakin points out. However, since a German case known as Weber von Hartz v Bilka Kaufhaus set a precedent in the European courts, the point that should strike fear into an employer's heart is the unwieldy-sounding test of justifiability, combined with Indirect Sex Discrimination in the Sex Discrimination Act, under which Rolls brought her claim.

Indirect sex discrimination occurs when a difference in treatment, although not aimed at depriving members of one particular sex of their rights, disproportionately affects one sex more than another. IPC, Lakin says, were imposing on men and women alike a condition to continue in full-time employment, and this is "an equal rule with an unequal effect, because women continue to have major responsibility for childcare". So IPC were practising indirect sex discrimination because Sarah Rolls was unable to return to work full-time without detriment to herself: "My first son was very disturbed after I'd gone back to work full-time and I felt guilty and didn't want to put the second one through the same thing."

Since the German case, the burden of proof has shifted to the employer to prove that full-time work is a necessity and, Lakin says, "one can only speculate that IPC decided they weren't going to succeed — especially taking the Essentials article into account".

His advice to employers is to "consider such requests seriously and comply with them if they can. Many companies still have a knee-jerk reaction and think it's OK if you're at the check-out at Sainsbury's but not for a manager".

Possible but not probable: the Institute of Management's new report, to be published in September, shows that only 18 per cent of British managers work part-time, compared with 75 per cent of clerical staff and 42 per cent of administrative workers. Marks & Spencer, which now classifies its staff as permanent or temporary rather than full- or part-time (because no one works a seven-day week) has three-quarters of its general staff working part-time but only 10 per cent of management. The firm does, however, have six job-shares, in "quite senior positions".

Credit Suisse investment management also believe the relationship between client and manager would be damaged: "It's far too personal a thing and it would be hopeless if it wasn't clear who was running things." Well, it would be clear: the portfolios would be shared between two people. "I suppose you can make anything work if you put in enough effort. It would be of limited value to the firm," a company spokesman says.

Charlie Monkcom, one of four joint co-ordinators (job-sharing, of course) at New Ways to Work, an educational charity pioneering new working patterns, believes that attitudes are changing — "Sarah Rolls would have lost her case eight years ago" — and that there is now such a body of experience showing that job-sharing is feasible that the employers' position is less tenable. However, he feels that in some cases it can't work: "Where there's a need for affirmative leadership, for example. And perhaps with lawyers and accountants, where the client wants the same person there all the time."

What about the rest of Europe? Job-sharing is surprisingly rare, but this is often because state provision for childcare is generous and part-timers there have more statutory rights than those in Britain. In Holland, under the Collective Agreement between employers and trade unions, anyone has the legal right to go part-time. Some men are choosing to go from full-time to four days a week in order to look after their children. In Sweden, a mother has the right to take maternity leave until her child is 18 months old and then to work 75 per cent of her previous hours until the child is eight.

There is a distinct pattern in southern Europe; there tend to be few part-time workers because businesses are often small and family-run. In Italy, employers have shown no interest because the cost of part-time social contributions are high. In northern Europe there are more part-timers: 21 per cent in Denmark and 36 per cent in the Netherlands, compared with 24 in Britain.

In the US, job-sharing is fairly rare: "Companies would rather hire consultants on an hourly rate and avoid paying health benefits," says one foreign news editor at Associated Press in New York, who successfully job-shared for years with another mother, both having returned from maternity leave. Interestingly, when a man applied for a job-share there because he wanted spare time in which to write a novel, he was turned down because "the head of department wanted to keep job-shares for women with families".

Is this sex discrimination? Alan Lakin says not: "If a company lets a woman job-share in order to spend more time with her children, and a man comes along and says he wants to go part-time for other reasons, then it wouldn't be considered detrimental to him to work full-time."

Whether for reasons of childcare or creativity, many job-sharers or part-timers — myself included — feel going back to a five-day week would be unbearable.

Would Sarah Rolls like to return to full-time work? "When you've had a career, it's nice to keep that side of your life ticking over. But I can't imagine going back until my children are older. And I can't imagine going back into magazines," she says.

ILLUSTRATION: ROGER TOOTH

Throwing the book at the Internet

Are books on the way out or is the information superhighway just a load of hype? **Steve James** puts them to the test

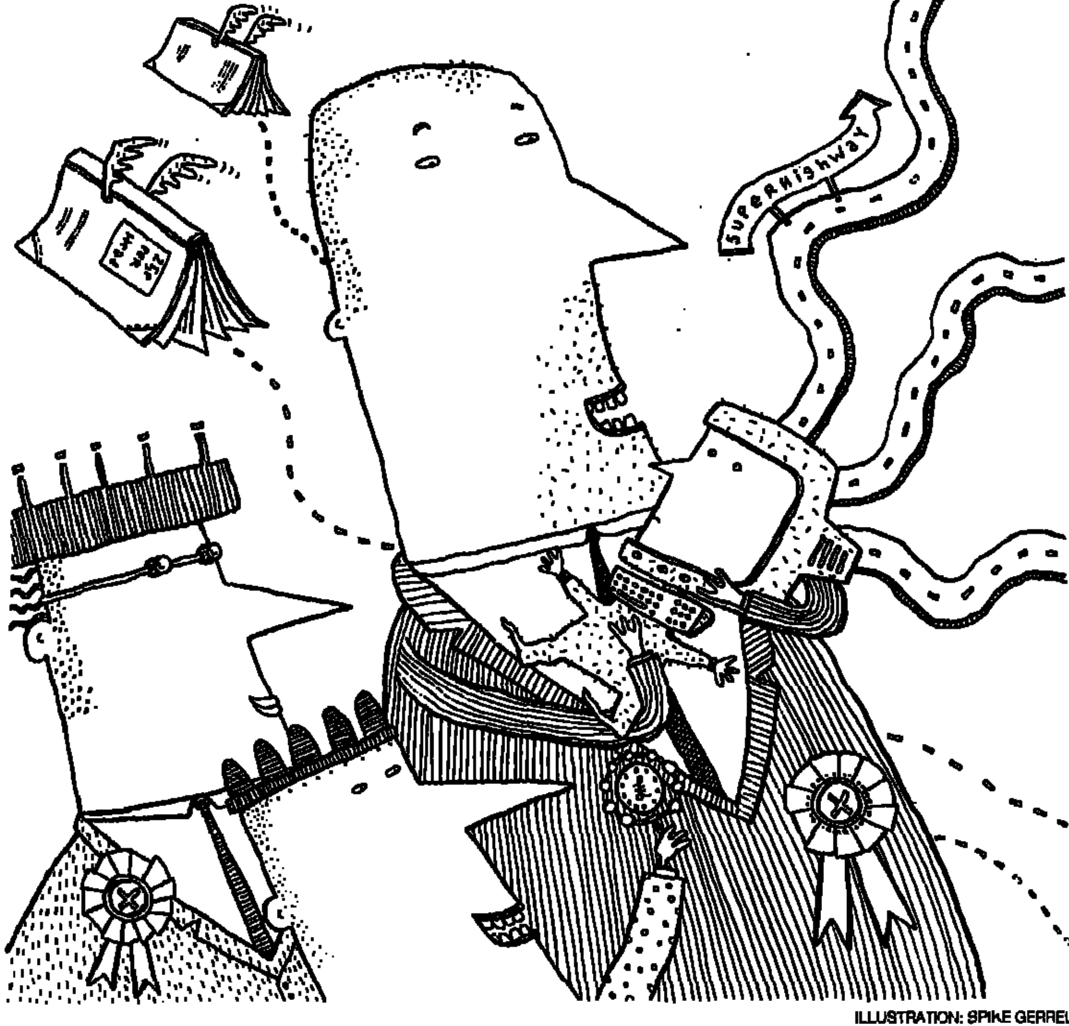


ILLUSTRATION: SPIKE GERRELL

B*Y THE END* of the century the voter-friendly, information superhighway will contain more words than the Library of Congress. With more than 30 million pages of text already available in cyberspace, the Internet has been dubbed the greatest educational resource ever. It's the new electronic democracy.

The computer frontiersmen of the British new left and new American right have been donning their Marshall McLuhan hats and riding into town. For an increasing number of them, the temptation is to cast the so-called superhighway in the role of information cash-crop, to cultivate it in the belief that traditional civic institutions and services will wither on the vine. Downsize traditional provision from the high street library, the theory runs, and let individuals fill the gap by purchasing information from the net.

Many agree that it's time to replace books with fully electronic libraries. "It's going to have to happen sooner or later, so the best thing is to get on with it, figure out the pitfalls and see how it will work," says Sean Geer, managing editor of Wired magazine.

Society used to equate the growth of libraries with the growth of civilisation — from the baked clay tablets at Nineveh, the two great libraries at Alexandria, to the 4,769 public libraries established in Britain since 1850. Despite falling attendance, Britons still use libraries heavily: six out of 10 people in England and Wales use a public library at least once a year. Of 132 million volumes on the shelves, 33.5 million are on loan at any one time.

But the statistics for funding are bleak — book funds for inner London down 39 per cent over the past 10 years, 16 per cent fewer librarians, £612 million needed for building.

Most library users are middle-class voters with an interest in the health of the library service; but they also buy into a hi-tech future. If politicians underfund high street libraries but launch half-cocked into cyberspace, who pays the price? Compare the 25p of tax spent on libraries per head of population with the £1,000 or more it costs to buy a multimedia PC and modem. Then add the cost of a copy of Windows 3.1 or Windows 95, plus phone calls and up to £10 per month for an Internet subscriber, and the superhighway weighs in as the far more expensive option.

Politicians have started uttering platitudes about the value of the Internet to the public. But there is a difficulty in trying to equate computer-power with citizenry: the content of the Internet has no respect for time or space — or social and ethical niceties. A library does not simply dematerialise overnight; sites on the Internet often disappear. And if the superhighway could ever be tamed it won't be elected representatives deciding what it publishes or to what standards.

To understand why, first appreciate just how unintelligent and unmysterious a place the Internet actually is. It has no central brain, it has no secret ingredient. It's simply numerous computers talking with each other. Any page that's published on the Internet is located not in a void but on a host computer. Magical it isn't; nor is it virtual.

The easiest route into the Internet is through the World Wide Web, which is millions of graphic pages called sites that are connected through hypertext links (these are the bits of highlighted text which, when pressed, let you jump to another page).

There's no problem if you know the address of a site — just dial its URL (Uniform Resource Locator), a cross between a post code and the ISBN number you'll find on the back of a book. Suppose, however, you're researching blind. You're no more likely to realise that the URL for First Aid Online is http:/www.segaoa.com than you are to know that on the shelves of a high street library a book about the Corn Laws is filed under code History 941.081. In this case you consult a search engine — the Internet's version of a librarian. You feed it key words, then the search engine does the finding — allegedly.

This is where the fun starts. To discover how effective this process really is, I'm going to compare how good the Internet is at sourcing reference material with a conventional library. There are several pieces of information I'm looking for. Against the clock I try to locate them on the Internet and in a medium-sized urban library in north London.

I want to know a) how much more it costs to produce a supposedly BSE-free, organically-reared cow than one produced by conventional means; b) the date of the Beveridge Report on the welfare state; c) what happened when the Tory party fragmented over the Corn Laws.

I told the engine supplied by my net service provider to search under Corn Laws. With a 72 per cent match rating, top of the list of finds was "Breast implant firm halts compensation claim". Another engine came up with "Dow Corning bankruptcy filing impedes silicone implant cases". It was the same story but at least I knew what was happening: the search engines were matching Corn Laws with news stories from May 1995 on Dow Corning, an American manufacturer of silicone breasts.

T*IME* to think laterally, with British political history as the new parameter. Again the results were wildly unpredictable. Some engines gave a list of recent press comments by contemporary British politicians, others found abstracts on the history of British Columbia — and, yes, some discovered sites about British history. That much, at least, was encouraging. All I had to do now was to start opening the pages and work my way through any hotlinks until I found the answer.

The trawl lasted two hours. I'd tracked down a suitable document and was within a hair breadth of getting the goods — or so I still believe — only to discover that the journal I wanted on British political history of the 1800s wasn't an on-line service at all but a subscription page for a paper-based academic magazine.

The following day I tried a new engine. It led me straight to a succinct description of the Corn Laws. If only this had happened earlier.

But that's a good illustration of just how hit-and-miss the Internet can be. The search relating to cattle farming proved equally frustrating for different reasons with 6,000 entries under "organic farming" to scroll through. And while "organic farming costs" should have narrowed the odds it created exactly the same list. Looking under BSE produced no joy either. In one instance up popped a long, long list of uninformative briefings on mad cow disease — while another engine interpreted the acronym as (yet another mammiform red herring) Breast Self-Examination.

I had successfully researched only one fact in four and meanwhile the Internet had stolen five hours of my life and plundered £4 from me in phone calls. Time to step out for air.

As well as a good range of books, Kentish Town library hires music CDs for 60p (with 10 or more tracks per disc, a snip compared with the seven minutes and 9p spent downloading a 15-second sound sample from an Internet jukebox). It has a file containing the last two weeks newspapers, as well as magazines.

Less than an hour later I'd completed my research. Some of the books weren't located where they were meant to be, but suitable alternatives were always at hand. And much of the content was surprisingly up-to-date.

So full-ish marks for the local library and its efficiency and only *deux points* for the net — but why? Perhaps the real strength of the Internet lies in people finding people, not finding information, as Brewster Kahle, the founder of Wide Area Information Services, recently wrote in Wired: "Information retrieval is not about finding how much tannin there is in an apple. It's about letting everyone publish."

The term "classification in crisis" is overused among the library community, but as the sum of human knowledge expands so do the gaps in categorising it. Humans make mistakes when deciding which information is relevant to a particular inquiry. Attempting to get a computer to work it out can be nigh-on impossible.

A*S THE* Web booms so does the growth in processing power. The prospect of increased competition, quicker spider programs that trawl the Internet in search of new sites, and more sophisticated indexing programs, lead both Sean Geer from Wired and Guy Daines from the Library Association to believe that the Internet will become more efficient and cheaper to operate.

"Information can make companies very rich," explains Geer, "so most work very hard to improve the quality of it, and as larger businesses continue to enter the market you'll see prices drop and the standards raised."

Daines agrees: "After a while the problem becomes not one of capital investment but of revenue implications. If you buy a book it's a physical object and can be used by X number of people. Far more worrying is how we'd keep track of charges for the Internet. What would have to happen is that consortiums of public libraries would form to purchase their information needs."

This is the real dilemma for the politicians: there is no centre or organisation to the Internet. Information capital is like financial capital: vast, global and subject only to its markets. It is possible for governments to buy stakes in the content of the Internet but, as Geer points out, the policy shift would be enormous and so would the costs.

The creation of the global village will not mean universally rising standards. That can only be addressed on a local level — by teachers, by parents who encourage learning, by responsive and highly-trained keepers of public knowledge.

The potential of the Internet is vast — but perhaps it is time for a moment to put aside digital dreams and think old-fashioned thoughts of more books on shelves. If only to lift learning out from between an underfunded rock and a technical hard place. And if only to realise that when the lure of the superhighway becomes irresistible we must travel on it prepared. Otherwise, we stand at the roadside and gaze in dumb reverence upon the clothes of the new wave emperor.

LIBRARIES pros and cons

- They're cheap and easy to use . . . but underfunded and worn out.
- Libraries have atmosphere . . . if being told to keep quiet is your idea of ambience.
- Take the family . . . is that your only option on a rainy day?
- You can hire CDs and videos . . . and enjoy someone else's crackles and scratches.
- Books are durable and sensual . . . but how many times can you enjoy the same book?

INTERNET pros and cons

- Cheap and easy to use . . . well, cheapish, and time-consuming.
- Open 24 hours . . . accessible only between 2am and 5am.
- Huge database . . . unedited ramblings clog the system.
- Electronic democracy . . . you're kidding — it costs around £2,000 for all the gear.
- Exciting and fun . . . apart from eye-strain, wrist-ache, frustration, loneliness.



Tennis Wimbledon Championship

Bit-part players take centre stage

Stephen Bierley

WHEN Todd Martin, one of the most phlegmatic players on the men's circuit, describes something as "interesting", one can be pretty sure that all hell has broken loose.

Martin, the last surviving seed in the bottom half of the men's draw, eased his 6ft 6in frame into an uncomfortable-looking chair last Saturday and surmised it had indeed been "an interesting week" and that it was "nice to see a few new names".

Nobody disputed Martin's accuracy. Of the 16 original men's seeds only five started the second week at the All England Club. The modern era has never known such carnage.

The seeding committee reserve the right to juggle with world rankings. In Melbourne, Paris and New York the computer rules; Wimbledon adds the human touch.

Understandably the loss of Andre Agassi, Yevgeny Kafelnikov, Michael Chang, Jim Courier et al has led to criticism. Germany's Michael Stich, never short of an opinion, led the attack.

Stich's complaint is that too many of the heavy servers have ended up in the top half of the draw. True, it may be regarded as unfortunate that only one from Pete Sampras, Goran Ivanisevic and Stich himself can make the final but the seeding committee can hardly be blamed for the loss of Becker through injury or the vagaries of the draw.

"It's a fluke what happened to Boris," said Martin. "And you can't say that, since Agassi doesn't serve as big as Goran, they should swap places in the draw."

Sampras, whose response to such matters is as controlled and spare as much of his play, replied to the controversy by saying nothing should be changed. "It's just the way it has happened — in the bottom half of the draw the guys just haven't come through, so what can you do?"

The All England Club is no more likely to succumb to computer power than it is to rip up the grass. And the arguments about both will doubtless continue forever and a day.

Sampras rarely worries about what is going on around him in the draw, although even he was aware of the hold football had last week. "It seemed like Wimbledon had taken a back seat." It had. And, although the thought of a Sampras-Martin final hardly sets the blood singing, they locked into a colossal five-set third-round match in the French Open.

Sampras has had no such energy-sapping encounters so far; he benefits hugely from the serve-oriented tennis on grass, with its usually short and sharp rallies.

Meanwhile Britain's Tim Henman not only played well during week one but also conducted himself off the court with a purposeful rationality. Euro 96 shielded him from a full-blown media onslaught but further progress is sure to leave him carrying the burden of a nation's expectations.

The computer that adjusts women's rankings on tournament results rarely overheats. Katarina Studenikova's second-round victory over Monica Seles provided the biggest glitch of the first week. The 23-year-old Slovak won 7-5, 5-7, 6-4 but a fit and match-honed Seles would have galloped through this match. Lack of tennis caught up with her as it did Andre Agassi, albeit sooner than most had expected.

The early defeat of Seles, coupled with last Saturday's defeat of the No 5 seed, Germany's Anke Huber, seems to have given Arantxa Sanchez Vicario a turbulence-free flight to the final.

Not so long ago, when Steffi Graf was disconcerted by the jailing of her father for income tax evasion, it was feared that her reign was over. Her quarter-final defeat in the Italian Open, where her mind was clearly miles away from her match against Martina Hingis, emphasised that concern.

Then came her 19th Grand Slam victory in the French Open and predictions of her imminent decline looked foolish. Graf has no intention of becoming history yet and her first three matches here have done nothing to diminish the impression that a seventh Wimbledon title is well within her grasp. However, she does have a slight problem with her left knee and wore a small sticking plaster against Nicole Arendt. "It takes a little bit of pressure away from the tendon."



Premature exit . . . Boris Becker retires after injuring his right wrist in the match with Neville Godwin PHOTOGRAPH: CLIVE BRUNSKILL

Sports Diary Mike Kiely

Christie raring to go

LINFORD CHRISTIE'S "will-he, won't-he" game with the media over whether he would defend his 100m title in Atlanta finally ended when the 36-year-old Londoner confirmed his decision to take on the world's fastest men. Christie will also compete in the 200m and sprint relay, and appeared relaxed, telling the assembled press: "I don't think I will be around to run in 2000, so I might as well grab this opportunity now."

Another great Olympian and holder of eight gold medals, sprinter Carl Lewis (below right), has failed to make the line-up for the United States 4 x 100 metres relay team after finishing last in the 100m at the US Olympic trials.

Unless there is an injury to one of the four athletes selected — Dennis Mitchell, Michael Marsh, Jon Drummond and Leroy Burrell — Lewis will be left with only the long jump to aim for, denying him the chance to equal the record of 10 gold medals achieved by Ray Ewry.

Meanwhile, Britain's Diane Modahl successfully fought off a High Court attempt by the British Athletic Federation to block the damages action she has launched against the organisation after being cleared of drug-taking allegations.

THE climax of Euro 96 had a familiar ring to it . . . another major tournament, another case of Deutschland über alles. There was a feeling of *déjà vu* about England's fate as well, Terry Venables becoming the second coach of the national side to see his team denied a final appearance after losing a penalty shoot-out to Germany. In contrast to Bobby Robson's side in Turin in 1990, it was Tel's boys who took the lead, thanks to an Alan Shearer header in the third minute. However, the advantage was relinquished inside 15 minutes, Stefan Kuntz converting a cross from Thomas Helmer. Both sides missed chances to finish the game from open play and the spot kick competition finished 6-5 after Gareth Southgate saw his effort saved by Andreas Köpke. In the other semi, France also lost on penalties, Reynaud Pedros failing from the spot to give the Czechs victory.

Lewis: relay hopes dashed

THE ground staff at Edgbaston are expected to find themselves on a sticky wicket this week at a meeting of the Test & County Cricket Board's pitches sub-committee after complaints about the state of the turf, most recently after last month's first Test against India. Warwickshire County Cricket club has reportedly received recommendations from the TCCB's inspector of pitches, Harry Brind, and although there is no question at this stage of Edgbaston losing its status as a Test venue, head groundsman Steve Rouse and chairman of the house-and-ground committee Mike Hurst may face some fierce deliveries from irate TCCB members.

ENGLAND'S team for the third and final Test against India at Trent Bridge is likely to see only one major change from Lord's, with left-arm spinner Min Patel coming in for Peter Martin. The full team is: Atherton (capt), Stewart, Hussain, Thorpe, Hick, Irani, Russell, Lewis, Cork, Mullally, Patel, Ealham, Salisbury.

WALES lost their Rugby League European title on home ground when England came to Cardiff and carried off the spoils thanks to a 26-12 winning margin, man of the match Bobby Goulding contributing 14 points.

THE world heavyweight boxing merry go-round gained another passenger when London's Henry Akinwande defeated Jeremy Williams to claim the World Boxing Organisation belt relinquished by Riddick Bowe, and joined Frank Bruno, Lennox Lewis and Herbie Hide as Britons who have won a modern version of the world heavyweight title. A bout with Mike Tyson is not out of the question: Tyson reportedly prefers taller opponents, and at 6ft 7in, Akinwande certainly fits the bill.

ONE Englishman will have cause to thank German team manager Berti Vogts after placing a £122 accumulator bet with the bookmaker William Hill. Having been proved right with his other predictions, he was set to win £201,069 if the Germans carried off the trophy at Wembley. If he fancies another flutter, one firm is already offering odds of 7-1 on Vogts's squad taking the World Cup in Paris in two years' time.

Shiv Sharma is on holiday

Motor Racing

Hill profits from Ferrari's misfortune

Alan Henry at Magny-Cours

DAMON HILL was delivered victory in the French Grand Prix on a plate on Sunday when Michael Schumacher's Ferrari, which had qualified on pole position, suffered major engine failure as it was leading the pack round the final formation lap to the starting grid.

It was Hill's sixth win of the season, and it took him 25 points clear in the world championship over his Williams team-mate Jacques Villeneuve, who was runner-up, as he prepares for an emotional home grand prix at Silverstone on July 14.

"I was worried that Michael's engine was going to blow up in a big way and leave a huge oil slick," said Hill, "so I had to back off. His car was spraying a lot of oil out on to the track and also on to my visor. It was pretty unexpected, really, but of course it made the race a whole lot easier for me at the start."

With his key championship rival falling away, Hill's Williams cantered to a commanding eight-second victory over his Canadian team-mate — who drove a determined race wearing a surgical neck support, needed after he walked away from a spectacular 135mph accident during Saturday's qualifying session.

With Jean Alesi and Gerhard Berger finishing third and fourth, it was a 1-2-3-4 grand slam for Renault's latest specification RS8B engine, which was being used for the first time at this race. It was also a salutary reminder of the huge performance benefit these teams stand to lose at the end of next season when the French company withdraws from Formula One.

Things could hardly have been worse for Ferrari. Even before Schumacher's abrupt departure the team had been in trouble during qualifying when Eddie Irvine's car was found to have a "dimensional irregularity" — one of the deflector panels on the bodywork was higher than allowed. Irvine had his qualifying times disallowed and had to start from 22nd and last place on the grid rather than his original tenth place.

Schumacher did not mince his words. "At first I was very angry," he said. "Angry because, in a few seconds, I saw all the hard work I have done together with the team go up in smoke. But it is at times like this that you must control your emotions and stay cool and rational.

"The fact that we would have reliability problems is something I was aware of from the moment I started working for Ferrari. However, I thought we would have them at the start of the season, rather than after a period of good reliability."

Completing the top six were the McLaren-Mercedes of Mika Hakkinen and David Coulthard. Hakkinen ran strongly in third place ahead of Villeneuve in the early stages but dropped back after losing first and second gear just before halfway.